African Access Initiative (AAI)

at the

2019 AORTIC Conference on Cancer in Africa

Maputo, Mozambique
November 5-8, 2019
At this year’s AORTIC (African Organization for Research and Training in Cancer) Conference, BIO Ventures for Global Health (BVGH) brought together African oncologists, pathologists, and healthcare leaders with companies, governments, and NGOs to review the progress of the African Access Initiative (AAI) toward the goals of (1) sustainably expanding access to cancer medicines and technologies, (2) improving healthcare infrastructure, and (3) building clinical oncology capacity in Africa.

AAI partners and global health change-makers engaged in workshops focused on expanding the AAI cancer drug access program across six African countries and operationalizing the African Consortium for Cancer Clinical Trials (AC³T).

BVGH’s workshops and panel presentations at the conference showcased the important role local healthcare providers, the pharmaceutical industry, academic institutions, and governments play in addressing Africa’s emerging cancer crisis.

### AAI EVENTS

- **African Consortium for Cancer Clinical Trials (AC³T) Clinical Trial Workshop**
- **African Access Initiative (AAI) Cancer Drug Access Workshop**

### AORTIC EVENTS

BVGH’s President & CEO Jennifer Dent and Senior Director Katy Graef contributed to discussions at several AORTIC sessions including ones hosted by the African Cancer Leaders Institute and AORTIC’s Education and Training Committee.
AFRICAN CONSORTIUM FOR CANCER CLINICAL TRIALS (AC³T) Clinical Trial Workshop

Clinical trials offer African cancer patients access to lifesaving cancer treatments, while generating important efficacy and safety data in populations underrepresented in investigational drug studies.

Representatives from Côte d'Ivoire’s and Nigeria’s healthcare systems; Takeda Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd.; European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership; Massachusetts General Hospital; and other leading global oncology organizations discussed the benefits of augmenting current clinical trial capacity in Africa. They proposed calling on government leaders to prioritize national research efforts, including fostering and implementing cancer clinical trials led by African researchers with African cancer patients.

BVGH debuted the AC³T online platform which profiles African hospitals’ and research centers’ existing cancer clinical trial capabilities. Clinicians and researchers at the workshop believe that the AC³T online platform will enable sites to audit their cancer clinical trial readiness, identify areas for improvement, and begin to plan how to build on their existing capabilities.

AC³T WORKSHOP AGENDA

• Introduction to AC³T and online platform walkthrough
• AC³T clinical trial site gap analysis
• Building clinical trial capacity in Africa
• Creating a “Roadmap to Cancer Clinical Trial Readiness in Africa”

AC³T Online Profile Categories:
1. Clinical Trial Experience
2. Staffing
3. Diagnostics
4. Cancer Treatment
5. Laboratory Processes
6. Laboratory Equipment
7. Pharmacy
8. Systems & Data Management
AC³T Workshop Findings and Recommendations

Speakers and participants made the following observations:

1. African governments need to prioritize national research efforts, including clinical trials. A country should have a development plan to increase and implement clinical trials as this will attract funding (i.e., funders want to see a country-wide strategy).

2. Sites experienced in infectious disease clinical trials should leverage their existing capabilities to transition to conducting cancer clinical trials.

3. Baseline funding is needed by clinical trial sites so they can maintain their trained staff. Sustained funding can be achieved by branching out into new disease areas such as cancer and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs) — allowing sites to conduct more studies. Broadening the scope of diseases will provide funding to help bridge a site between other clinical studies.

4. Hospitals and research centers can use the AC³T checklist to audit their ability to conduct cancer clinical trials at international standards and to identify capacity-building areas. Sites should know what the minimum capacity is to conduct any human study.

5. Development of a “Roadmap to Cancer Clinical Trial Readiness in Africa” will provide sites guidance on the next steps to take to build their clinical trial capacity.

6. The AC³T online platform will broaden pharmaceutical companies’ awareness of African sites capable of conducting clinical trials. This platform will serve as an important resource for pharmaceutical companies and contract research organizations, as they tend to work with clinical trial sites that they already know.

6. Clinical trial sites lack opportunities to network, learn from one another, and share capacity around common interests. Participation in AC³T offers these opportunities to interested sites.

*AC³T CALL TO ACTION*

- Educate government leaders in your country about the need for — and benefits of — clinical trials.
- Submit a cancer clinical trial site profile for inclusion in the AC³T online platform.

**Call for Clinical Trial Sites**

If you are aware of a sub-Saharan African institution that serves/served as a clinical trial site and may be interested in participating in the African Consortium for Cancer Clinical Trials (AC³T), please [click here].

For more information about AC³T, contact Katy Graef at kgraef@bvgh.org.

“The need for cancer clinical trials in Africa is enormous. The AC³T online profiles of African cancer clinical trial sites afford us the ability to audit our clinical trial readiness and to understand our current limits. The Consortium enables us to collaborate and network with other clinical trial sites to improve our capabilities.”

- Dr. Tajudeen Olasinde, Professor of Radiation and Clinical Oncology, Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital in Zaria, Nigeria
Ensuring affordable access to cancer medicines is a complex, yet necessary, component of saving the lives of African cancer patients. Innovative models — such as public-private partnerships like the African Access Initiative (AAI) — are needed to address these complexities in a sustainable manner.

AAI activities are driven by the self-defined needs of participating hospitals, as articulated by BVGH’s AAI Hospital Needs Assessment. The Needs Assessment was developed with input and guidance from African healthcare professionals, global oncology experts, and pharmaceutical company scientists.

BVGH’s analyses of 30 hospitals’ needs assessments have highlighted the limited access African cancer patients have to affordable, lifesaving cancer drugs.

Responding to these results, BVGH partnered with Nigeria’s Federal Ministry of Health to launch a first-of-its-kind pilot cancer drug access program driven by the priorities of Nigeria’s cancer clinicians. To complement its drug access program, BVGH enlisted global oncology experts and pharmaceutical companies to build diagnostic and clinical oncology capacity in Nigeria and beyond.

Representatives from African governments, healthcare systems, and NGOs convened at the AAI Cancer Drug Access Workshop to review the progress of the AAI pilot cancer drug access program in Nigeria.

BVGH tapped the knowledge and desire of leaders at the workshop to set the course for expanding the cancer drug access program beyond the pilot stage. All agreed that the AAI cancer drug access program is necessary and its availability to other African countries should be communicated widely.

Dr. Faruk Mohammed, Cancer Scientist at Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital, presented a case study of cancer drug access in northern Nigeria.

“In Africa, cancer is just like a death sentence. More than 80 percent of the population in northern Nigeria cannot afford treatment. People are afraid to even come to the hospital for diagnosis. They know that if they are informed that they have cancer, there is nothing they can do about it because they cannot afford the therapy.”

- Dr. Faruk Mohammed, Cancer Scientist, Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital in Zaria, Nigeria
AAI Workshop Findings and Recommendations

Speakers and participants made the following observations:

1. For cancer patients, issues of treatment access in Africa will persist, even with more-affordable drugs. Patients coming from extreme poverty may have an income the equivalent of US $1 per day, making $100 for treatment still too much for them. The need for government funding and secure, equitable patient funding mechanisms are critical.

2. Success with patient funding mechanisms will require transparent financial systems that everyone can trust. Hospitals should be encouraged to use tertiary spending accounts, so that transparency and external oversight can be achieved.

3. Governments and philanthropists cannot address the cancer drug access challenge alone. They must establish partnerships with everyone who will play a role, including hospital chief medical directors, treatment providers, advocates, industry, and regional traditional rulers. For example, His Royal Highness Muhammadu Sanusi II, Emir of Kano State, was consulted for his advice; he, in turn, made the case for accessible cancer treatments to the government.

4. Advocacy in other areas (e.g., prevention, pathology and diagnosis) is important. First Ladies such as Dr. Zainab Shinkafi Bagudu, First Lady of Kebbi State, are powerful advocates for raising awareness and needed funding. Advocacy can show that providing access to quality, affordable cancer drugs will save lives.

“Through BVGH, we are going to help patients access chemotherapy at a price that they can afford. I am able to help to advocate the government of Kebbi State (Nigeria) to access these drugs to benefit cancer patients in the state. What we establish in Kebbi will be able to serve a large population.”

- Dr. Zainab Shinkafi Bagudu, First Lady, Kebbi State, Nigeria
  Founder/CEO, Medicaid Cancer Foundation

AAI CALL TO ACTION

- Advocate for increased funding for cancer therapies, and the creation of secure, equitable patient funding mechanisms.
- Engage your local advocates to promote sustainable and affordable access to cancer services across the continuum of cancer patient care.

For more information

Visit www.bvgh.org/african-access-initiative for the latest program information and to sign up for newsletter updates.

Special thanks to our AAI and AC³T workshop participants and our AAI Sponsors: