



# EADV News

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## African dermatopathology making strides

**A**n international African Dermato-pathology Meeting is being planned for 12-13 January 2015 in Moshi, Tanzania, to link with the official Regional Dermatology Training Centre (RDTC) CME Meeting on 14-16 January. It will be a free, two-day meeting covering the most important fields of dermatopathology. Speakers and experts have been invited from Africa and Europe and the meeting is open to all interested dermatologists and dermatopathologists.

### Training centre

The conference builds on the work of the Regional Dermatology Training Centre (RDTC) which was set up in Moshi, Tanzania in 1992. The centre has become an academic pan-African reference centre for the management of skin diseases and dermatological training. Each year it takes care of more than 13,000 patients and performs 500 skin biopsies. Its other important duties are: a) education of "community dermatologists" – since 1992 more than 200 such healthcare workers have been trained; b) education of residents in dermatology (currently 15 residents – 10 have already received the Dermatology Specialist Diploma since 1992); c) lectures for medical students at the local University; and d) organisation of a dermatological conference with a high international reputation.

### Essential service

Light microscopy studies of skin biopsy together with clinical evaluation are the most important step in dermatological diagnosis. Specialists visiting African dermatology clinics, such as RDTC, immediately realise the real need for dermatopathology services across Africa. The availability of such expertise varies significantly across the world. In developing countries there is limited or no access at all to specialists such as dermatologists and dermatopathologists. In sub-Saharan Africa, trained and/or board-certified dermatopathologists are extremely rare (less than 14% of countries).

### Effectiveness

The thought of even developing dermatopathology in developing countries can be met with scepticism. Even to those involved, it may seem foolhardy to introduce histological laboratories into Africa where the primary health needs may seem to be of an entirely different nature. In reality, however, dermatopathology has certain characteristics that make it particularly suitable for the needs of developing countries: costs are low, particularly when compared with other



Dr S Kiprono and Dr H Beltraminelli - Dermatopathology teaching in Bern, Switzerland

diagnostic procedures, and the organ of concern (the skin!) is superficial and accessible therefore efficiency rates are much higher.

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### DOIT

Dermatology online

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### 23<sup>rd</sup> EADV Conference

8-12 October 2014  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

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### EADV Elections

Board directors; Committee  
chairs and members

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EUROPEAN ACADEMY OF DERMATOLOGY AND VENEREOROLOGY  
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## African dermatopathology making strides

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Dermatopathology's effectiveness is shown best where there is an infrastructure to support it. RDTTC is one of the best examples of such an institution. Biopsy-taking should be in the curriculum of any healthcare worker trained in basic dermatology skills ("community dermatologist") and working near the bottom of the healthcare pyramid.

In Africa there are now more than 200 such specialists able to do skin biopsies who were trained at the Tanzanian centre. A skin biopsy is a simple technique with a great impact on diagnosis. Proving the existence of a disease can be seen as an approach to choosing the correct treatment for individual patients and ultimately as a starting point of a supporting programme.

### Development study

A group of motivated experts with limited funding recently started a project focusing on the development of dermatopathology at RDTTC with the main aim of supporting and coordinating the development of dermatopathology in Africa starting from one of the most important dermatology clinics of the sub-Saharan part of the continent. I worked as a volunteer at RDTTC in 2009 for six months, taking a sabbatical from my dermatopathology post in Switzerland, and have made regular visits since. I am now coordinating the development of dermatopathology expertise in Africa. We have an international collaboration with specialists from different university hospitals: Nairobi (Kenya), Kakamega (Kenya), Bern (Switzerland), Tübingen (Germany), Madrid (Spain), Graz (Austria), Cape Town (South Africa) and Rome (Italy).

### EADV support

EADV supports this multicentre initiative which is very much complementary to the current work of RDTTC and has liaised closely with many dermatopathologists from Europe and USA. The efforts are integrated in ongoing initiatives of an

existing panel of specialists committed to promoting dermatology and dermatopathology in Africa (Prof H Grossmann, Prof R Hay, Dr C Fuller, Prof B Naafs, Dr S Kiprono, Dr J Cuevas and Prof L Cerroni).

The main objectives include:

- The organisation of the dermatopathology curriculum at RDTTC through regular courses and workshops for local residents in dermatology.
- Promoting education of, and implementing basic biopsy techniques among, "community dermatologists" by providing teaching of biopsy technique and biopsy materials (punches, gauze, local antiseptics).
- Coordination of the regular (but not yet continuous) presence of a senior dermatopathologist at RDTTC to support a regular slide-reading back-up throughout the year.
- Scholarships for motivated African pathologists/dermatologists willing to learn dermatopathology in Europe. The goal should be the successful participation in the International Board Examination of Dermatopathology (IBED) in Frankfurt, Germany.
- The organisation of an international African dermatopathology meeting in January 2015, alongside the official RDTTC Meeting.

### Successes

Among the many successful activities in the region have been:

- Since 2009 funds have been raised for and invested in the African dermatopathology project, mostly for fellowship-exchange programmes. These are grants from Basel University, from IFD (Prof R Hay), and several private donations.
- Since 2011 all dermatopathology slides are completely processed at RDTTC in the new fully equipped dermatopathology laboratory.
- Since 2009 there has been a regular



Dermatology residents at RDTTC, Moshi, Tanzania

presence of dermatopathologists at RDTTC (Dr J Cuevas, Dr Kiprono and myself).

- Publication in 2013 and 2014 of three peer-reviewed studies of dermatopathology activities at RDTTC (Kiprono et al, Beltraminelli et al, Amani et al), with other studies currently ongoing.
- The opportunity for selected African physicians to increase their knowledge and expertise in dermatopathology outside Africa and for two African colleagues (Dr D Zuriel, Kenya, 2011; and Dr S Kiprono, Kenya, 2013) to successfully pass the International Board Examination in Dermatopathology (IBED).

Currently we are offering a scholarship for training to one dermatologist from Rwanda (Dr A Amani) and one dermatologist from Ethiopia (Dr A Belachew), and more specialists from other Africa countries will be trained in Europe during next years.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the EADV project decision board for supporting the African Dermatopathology Development Project. It is an immense pleasure to see the high engagement of the African Fellows at the microscope and to see the increase of dermatopathology activities in the African continent. Thank you again on behalf of all Fellows.

For further information about the African Dermatopathology Meeting and the official RDTTC Meeting in January 2015, please contact:

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