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## IN THIS EDITION

From the Editorial Desk ..... 1  
President's Note ..... 2  
Member Spotlight ..... 3  
CONTENTS..... 4  
Donation to the HopeXchange  
Medical Centre ..... 7

Sarpong Foundation Takes Hypertension Head on in Ghana ..... 8  
International Healthcare  
Volunteers Inc ..... 9  
Young Physicians and  
Medical Students ..... 10  
Rites Program, Scholarships ..... 10  
Regional or Chapter News ..... 11

## From the Editorial Desk

### What a difference a year brings!

A couple of months ago, the editorial team was tasked with the responsibility of the publication of a newsletter of the Ghana Physicians and Surgeons Foundation of North America

So here we are, with an e-newsletter, which informs on all our ongoing efforts and projects of the Foundation and brings to you relevant health and educational information from the Diaspora and the motherland, Ghana. Your comments, inputs and enthusiasm in this project are well noted, and the editorial board counts on your continued support and enthusiasm to keep this going and alive. We set out cognizant of our VISION and MISSION to support the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons.

The journey of a practitioner from medical school, residency, fellowship, to active practice and retirement with all its twists and turns brings with it experiences and memories that we are obligated to share for our legacy to continue; and to impact the next generation of healthcare workers and our communities.

To this end, our newsletter features reports on impactful events and projects, shines a spotlight on colleagues impacting the medical community, brings updates on local and international efforts from members of the Foundation, Section for Young Professionals, and other worthy achievements.

We may be at different stages of this journey, but the memories made and opportunities to learn, share and grow together will certainly go a long way to ensure a long, happy and lasting career.

That's what visionaries do. We decided the idea of resurrecting the newsletter needed a second chance, so here we go at it again and hope the few minutes you spend reading it was worth it. Please share with us your story and give us feedback to improve the next issue.



# PRESIDENT'S NOTE

## President's Note

Dear Colleagues,

I am very excited to introduce you to the relaunch of the "GPSF Newsletter" which will be published online every quarter. This newsletter will provide a means to inform you of current happenings in the Ghana Physicians and Surgeons Foundation of North America (GPSF) and to showcase the great strides the Foundation is making in advancing its core mission of supporting the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons as well as providing advocacy and support in improving healthcare delivery in Ghana. This is a publication that is open to all medical practitioners in the Diaspora and in Ghana, and I would greatly encourage each of you to email relevant articles and features that can be included in subsequent issues of the newsletter. The editorial board is open to adding new members to its ranks and welcomes any members with writing or publishing experience to join in this effort.

Take a minute to review the contents of this newsletter and you will find interesting features and articles that highlight the work of the GPSF both at home and abroad. In this inaugural issue you will find information on CME activities, RITES program activities, Young Professionals, Local Chapter News, among others. With each issue, the editorial board will also take a timeout to shine the spotlight on a member of the organization who is engaged in excellent and quality work and whose mission is in line with the broad mission of the GPSF.

I hope you find this newsletter interesting and informative. Last, but not least, I would like to congratulate the editorial board on the splendid job in the relaunch of this newsletter. AYEKOO!



**Leticia Otchere-Darko M.D.**  
PRESIDENT -GPSF

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# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## Member Spotlight

**Dr. Nii-Daako Darko**

**Hometown:** Irvington, NJ

**College:** Lehigh University (2000)

**Medical School:** Kansas City University of Medicine & Biosciences – College of Osteopathic Medicine (2006)

**Business School:** Rockhurst University – Helzberg School of Management (2006)

**Residency:** General Surgery; Morehouse School of Medicine (2011)

**Fellowship:** Trauma/Critical Care, Univ. of Miami (2012)

**Current Position:** Trauma/Emergency General Surgeon, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center



Dr. Darko is involved in several projects that serve the community. His podcast **'Docs Outside the Box'** features in depth and insightful conversations with 'doctors doing extra ordinary things and pushing the envelope beyond medicine'. He and his wife write a blog **'Keeping Up with the Darkos'** that is devoted to the pursuit of financial peace, marital bliss, and career freedom. He is also the president of **Equal Access Health, Inc**, a Locums Tenens company which he founded in 2013. He is a member of **International Healthcare Volunteers** and regularly participates in medical mission trips to underserved countries. He currently holds a position at the Univ. of Pittsburgh Medical Center as a Trauma/General Surgeon. He is passionate about connecting people with one another and empowering medical professionals to become financially independent.

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FOUNDATION OF  
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# CONTENTS

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AND SURGEONS  
FOUNDATION OF  
NORTH AMERICA



## CONTENTS

### CME Activities/Fiesta

In 2010, the Foundation started talks with the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons (GCPS) about the introduction of an annual Continuing Medical Education (CME) conference into the College's educational activities. The first one was organized in August 2011; sponsored by the Foundation, Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons, and Africa Partners Medical (APM). It has since become one of the flagship events of the Foundation. The CME conference is dubbed "Medical Knowledge Fiesta" to depict the sharing and celebration of cutting-edge medical knowledge. Medical Knowledge Fiesta seeks to strengthen and promote evidence-based medical practice in Ghana and provides a platform for continuous education and knowledge sharing between medical doctors in the Diaspora and their counterparts in Ghana.

The 6th Fiesta took place in Accra from September 13th to 16th, 2016. There were 351 conference attendees and 56 faculty - of which 75% were faculty based in Ghana. The theme was "A COMPETENT PHYSICIAN, KEY TO A HEALTHY NATION".

Since its inception, Fiesta is always opened with a celebrative opening ceremony amidst drumming and dancing. At the opening ceremony this year, Dr. Henry Lawson on behalf of the local organizing committee welcomed participants. The ceremony was chaired by Prof Yao Tettey, former Dean of the University of Ghana Medical School. Representatives of the sponsoring organizations also welcomed the participants to the 6th Fiesta: Prof. Jacob Plange-Rule, Rector of GPSF; Prof Elijah Paintsil, the Foundation; and Dr. Michael Opong-Kusi, APM.

This year's keynote address was delivered by Prof. Mark Awuku, Department of Paediatrics, the University of Windsor, Canada. His address received wide media coverage and circulation. He said, "*Society wants high quality health services provided by health professionals who are competent and this is key when it comes to a healthy nation.*" Prof Awuku advised medical practitioners to strive to be competent, indicating that the fact that they had been licensed to practice did not necessarily mean they were competent. "*Competency is the combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. These attributes lead to a successful professional performance,*" he observed. He explained that being an expert in the medical specialty was very important but was not enough to become a competent physician. He described a competent physician as a person who was an expert in medicine, a communicator, collaborator, leader, health advocate, scholar, and a professional.

Prof. Yao Tettey, the chairman for the opening ceremony, stressed the need to reform the curriculum in the medical schools to adequately prepare the students before they enter mainstream medical practice. He said it was important to teach students communication skills to enable them communicate well with patients and added that effective communication with patients was critical in becoming a good medical practitioner.

### Topics covered

In Internal Medicine: included the global problem of heart failure, the role of food as medicine in cardiovascular disease and cancer, diabetes update, management of heart failure, management guidelines on hepatitis B, the role of food as medicine in the etiology and treatment of diabetes, bone health and osteoporosis, SLE and cardio metabolic risk, kidney transplantation in sub-Saharan Africa.

# CONTENTS

In Emergency Medicine: included harmful alcohol use among injured adult patients in the Ghanaian ER, the use of mobile and electronic technology in the ER, emerging mobile health in KATH, diagnostic accuracy of the Kampala trauma score, medical simulation as educational tool, carrier, development plan survey at KATH, overcrowding in the ER.

In Family Medicine: included hepatitis B and C prevalence, outcomes of PMTCT measures at centers in Kumasi, pulmonary function test in pre-employment medical, palliative care.

In Surgery/OBGYN: presentations were on endometrial cancer, polycystic ovarian syndrome, Urinary stones management KBTH, practicing dentist competency, open heart surgery in Kumasi, fertility sparing surgery for cervical cancer

In Psychiatry: discussions were on drug resistant depression, bipolar disorder QOL with diagnosis and misdiagnosis, depression and anxiety in epilepsy, functional recovery in the treatment of depression.

In surgery: primer to cancers affecting the GU tract, diabetic foot care, assessment of healthcare worker competencies point of care urinalysis testing at KATH, operative rate of childhood intussusceptions.

Pediatric discussions centered on infectious diseases and global threats, adolescents and HIV testing, and Pediatric ICU.

Anesthesia presentations were on ICU management of Guillain-Barre syndrome, integrating simulation into anesthesia training, high flow oxygen therapy in the absence of ventilators, anesthetist and holistic healthcare delivery, laboratory testing, individual case reports and several other fiesta special presentations

Workshops were held on ECG rhythm interpretation, setting up private practice, scientific writing, pain management, Interventional radiology, abnormal uterine bleeding, and neonatal resuscitation.



Some of the dignitaries sitting in the front row from the left: Dr. Opong-Kusi, 3rd; Dr Lawson, 4th; Prof Tettey, 6th; Prof Awuku, 7th; Prof. Paintsil, 8th; Dr. Omane Boamah (Minister of Communication), 9th; and Prof Plague-Rhule, 10th.

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AND SURGEONS  
FOUNDATION OF  
NORTH AMERICA



# CONTENTS



Dr Michael Oppong-Kusi (left) of African Partners Medical conversing with Prof. Awuku (center)



## **NGO Affairs / Ghana Mission Teams**

### **The Tarkwa Hospital Project**

The Tarkwa Hospital is requesting the help of members of GPSF who have trained in Pediatrics, Internal Medicine and Obstetrics & Gynecology for clinical work. Volunteers are needed for 2-4 week scheduled rotations. Volunteers will be responsible for their plane tickets, travel insurance (as applicable), and Tarkwa hospital will be responsible for housing and transportation to and from the hospital and from Accra as well as meals during their stay. Housing will be within walking distance to the hospital. GPSF will help cover the cost of credentialing fees with the Medical and Dental Council and will provide a letter to the volunteer for tax-deductible expenses.

EXPECTED DATE OF SERVICE: JANUARY 2017

Tarkwa is the capital of Tarkwa -Nsuaem Municipal District in the Western Region of Ghana. Tarkwa has a 2013 settlement population of 34,941 people and noted as a center of gold and manganese mining. Serving the people of the area is the Tarkwa Regional Hospital, a government owned hospital which was commissioned in 2014.

EXPECTED DATE OF SERVICE: JUNE 2017

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### Donation to the HopeXchange Medical Centre

In October 2016 GPSF made a presentation to the facility. The items were donated by Danville Regional Medical Center and consisted of supplies for the Operating Room (surgical gowns, Ophthalmology kits, laparoscopic kits, cardiovascular kits, laparotomy kits, laminectomy kits, open heart kits and arthroscopy kits worth over \$500,000).

The HopeXchange Medical Centre is an 80-bed medical facility located in Kumasi, Ghana, built by HopeXchange, Inc., a nonprofit international humanitarian organization.. Kumasi is a city of more than 1.5 million people in the heart of Sub-Saharan Africa. The Centre provides high quality sub-specialty medical training and patient care in various fields of medicine, with a particular emphasis on female cancers, HIV/AIDS, malaria, craniofacial malformations, ophthalmology and neurology. HopeXchange has created special alliances, bringing together top-ranking local and international experts to work collaboratively, with the full support of the major Ghanaian health, civic and religious institutions.

When fully operational, the Centre will feature, among other facilities: three surgical operating theatres, female and pediatric wards, outpatient center, intensive care unit, laboratory services, diagnostic imaging services, pharmacy and telemedicine technology.



Dr Nana Owusu Yaw (3rd from right) and Dr Victor Owusu-Yaw (4th from right) presenting donation



Drs Victor and Nada Owusu-Yaw presenting items to Hospital Administrator (left)

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**Sarpong Foundation Takes Hypertension Head on in Ghana.**

By Dr. Bertha Ayi, MD, FACP, FIDSA, MBA

Sarpong Foundation for Reduction of Disease and Poverty Inc. (SFRDP) is a nonprofit, 501c3 organization founded by Dr. Emmanuel Sarpong and Dr. Mrs. Judith Sarpong of Indiana (President and CEO respectively).

In July 2016 they undertook a trip to Ghana to screen almost 500 members of the Labadi and Teshie Assemblies of the Church of Pentecost for hypertension. This is part of the Ghana Free Clinic Pilot Project sponsored by SFRDP. This was a follow up from a previous visit last year. Those who were identified as having elevated blood pressure were started on anti-hypertensives under the care of Dr. Sarpong. Nurses from the various churches were part of the team and would provide feedback on response to treatment.

The foundation also provides free Blood Pressure medications to immigrants in the United States who cannot afford their Blood Pressure medications.



Figure 1 Dr. Emmanuel Sarpong, MD (right) giving a health talk during the screening process.



Figure 2. Miss Anna Sarpong (center) interviewing one of the patients.

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AND SURGEONS  
FOUNDATION OF  
NORTH AMERICA



# CONTENTS

## International Healthcare Volunteers Inc

### 2016 Medical Mission To Ghana

International Healthcare Volunteers began in 2001 after Dr. James Aikins lost a family member to postpartum hemorrhage in Ghana. Frustrated with the thought of losing a loved one to a condition easily treatable in the USA, Drs. Aikins & Ayers established IHCV in 2001 and held its first mission in 2002 to provide healthcare to women and continued medical education to healthcare providers in these underserved areas. Over the last 15 years IHCV has expanded its scope to include women, men and children.

International Healthcare Volunteer's fifteenth medical mission to Ghana, West Africa, took 27 volunteers to La General Hospital in Accra, Cape Coast Teaching Hospital and Metropolitan Hospital in Cape Coast. Working with our Ghanaian health professional colleagues, IHCV volunteers cared for 500 patients, performing 67 major surgical procedures over 9 working days.

IHCV prides itself on its focus for educational exchange between Ghanaian and IHCV medical students and residents. During the 2016 mission, IHCV volunteers attended and presented at grand rounds and conferences for continuing medical education including the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons annual knowledge fiesta on topics including heart failure, molar pregnancy, fertility preservation in cervical cancer, management of Postpartum hemorrhage, polycystic ovarian syndrome, abnormal uterine bleeding, pediatric resuscitation simulations, pediatric fluid replacement, and hypoglycemia of the newborn. Approximately 26 hours of CME were provided and 400 individuals touched by our outreach encounters, which included Senior Center Community outreach program, municipal and community BP screenings and Cape Coast Orphanage.

IHCV continues to cultivate its clinical and academic relationships in Ghana to maintain its cervical cancer, colon cancer, and HIV screening programs.

With every passing year, IHCV volunteers continue to gain more knowledge and skills from our Ghanaian colleagues and patients that will impact their lives and medical practice in the US. We look forward to returning in 2017 (July 28- Aug 12). Please visit our website to learn about what IHCV is doing to help our Global communities at [ihcv.org](http://ihcv.org)

### Charletta Ayers, MD, MPH, FACOG

Chairperson, International Healthcare Board

### James K. Aikins, MD, FACS, FACOG

Medical Director, International Healthcare

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FOUNDATION OF  
NORTH AMERICA





## Young Physicians and Medical Students

### Mission

The Young Professionals (YP) subset of the Ghana Physicians and Surgeon Foundation (GPSF) aims to promote the professional development of young Ghanaian physicians and allied health practitioners in Medicine, Surgery and related disciplines.

### Vision

To inspire a new generation of medical advocates who will influence health policy on the numerous health care issues in Ghana and Africa.

### Goals

- To cultivate the next generation of Ghanaian medical leaders.
- To offer a forum for young professionals to interact and network with each other and more experienced physicians

### Activities

- Mentorship between experienced professionals and members of YP
- YP-GPSF forum held at the annual GPSF conference
- Forums for members to ask questions and network with seasoned professionals
- Semi-annual meetings (one at Annual GPSF meeting, second as regional meeting)
- Service Projects to benefit institutions in Ghana

## Rites Program, Scholarships

In keeping with its mission to support the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons, the GPSF launched the highly successful Resident-In-Training Educational Stipend (RITES) program. Through this program, the GPSF sponsors a 6 to 8 weeks summer educational training program to US medical institutions for meritorious medical trainees selected by the faculty of the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Education Committee of the GPSF.

Participants received intense training in the field of scientific writing, biostatistics and clinical research as well as participate in clinical rounds/ activities and tutorials at the host institution. The program was launched in July 2015 with the first two sponsored recipients Dr. Rita Larsen Reindorf, ENT fellow from Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital, and Dr. Kwame Amponsa-Achiano, Physician Epidemiologist from the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital, who both participated in the Yale Partnerships for Global Health's Summer Research Institute. (YPGHSRI) in July - August 2015.

In 2016, the GPSF was pleased to welcome Dr. Joyceline Assimeng Dame (faculty of Pediatrics) and Dr. Samuel K. Asomani (faculty of Internal Medicine) who also participated in the Summer Research Institute.

The GPSF is aiming to expand the program by sponsoring more doctors from Ghana and also by increasing the number of participating US institutions. The GPSF is looking for US medical institutions that will serve as training sites for attachments for year 2017 and beyond. If your medical institution can serve as a host site for future participants, please forward pertinent information to [ghanaphysiciansusa@gmail.com](mailto:ghanaphysiciansusa@gmail.com)

Donations towards this worthy cause are welcome.



## Regional or Chapter News

1. Carolina Chapter GPSF
  - Meeting occurred on September 30, 2016.
  - Regional Chapter Officers INSTALLED were:  
**President:** Shirley Ocloo from Gastonia, NC  
**Vice President:** Dr. Yaw Owusu-Addo from Gastonia, NC  
**Secretary:** Dr. Nortei Dowuna from Greensboro, NC  
**Treasurer:** Dr. Aboagye Agyenim-Boateng, SC
  - Planning of Winter Meeting and chapter goals for the year are in progress.
2. Delaware Valley Chapter-PA, DE, South NJ
  - Meeting occurred on July 30, 2016.
  - Elected officers:  
**President:** Dr. Mamle Mante  
**Vice President:** Dr. Theodora Fynn  
**Organizing Secretary:** Dr. Shormeh Yeboah
3. New England Chapter
  - Meeting occurred on September 24, 2016.
  - Elected officers:  
**President:** Dr. Nii Tetteh
4. Arizona Chapter
  - Meeting occurred on September 24, 2016.
  - **President:** Dr. Clarence Sarkodee-Adoo
  - **Organizing Resident:** Dr. Emanuel Okoree-Siaw
5. Texas Chapter
  - Meeting planned in Houston in future with Dr. Kabutey Katei.



Carolina Chapter Meeting



Arizona Chapter Meeting

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