

An interview with Abdulaziz A. Sherif

On Wednesday March 4th, Dr. Gena Piliotis hosted a reception at her home in honor of visiting physician Dr. Abdulaziz A. Sherif, a haematologist from Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia. While staying with friends from home who now live in Toronto (one is an international medical school colleague now working in Toronto), Dr. Sherif is visiting the University of Toronto for six weeks; he has already visited the Odette Cancer Centre, various clinics, blood banks, labs, radiotherapy department, computer simulation, etc. and will see more areas in the coming weeks.

What do you hope to establish with this academic collaboration between AAU and UofT?

“With academic cooperation we hope to establish fellowship programs in Ethiopia in various divisions such as haematology, endocrinology, gastroenterology and infectious diseases. These divisions at AAU are already onboard. Infectious disease has already established their fellowship program and we are working to establish our haematology fellowship program by 2010.

“Ethiopia does not have nearly enough skilled manpower. With only two haematologists for a population of 80 million people (the numbers are similar for other disciplines) we are planning to expand these fellowships. So far, we have a residency program in internal medicine. Currently we graduate 25-30 internists annually, so we’ll be able to recruit some of them for sub-specialty programs.”

Where did you receive your training?

“I do not have formal training in haematology. I have been working as a prospective haematologist for the last 3 years. There is one haematologist who trained at Princess Margaret Hospital in 1992; Dr. Amha Gebremedhin— he led me to this path.”

How do you get the drugs paid for?

“There are few donation drug programs to the hospitals, and ultimately all patients have to pay for their own drugs. Through the donation of funds and drugs, 140 hodgekins patients have been fully treated with curative intent and a population of 165 patients have been treated with CML gleevec therapy.”

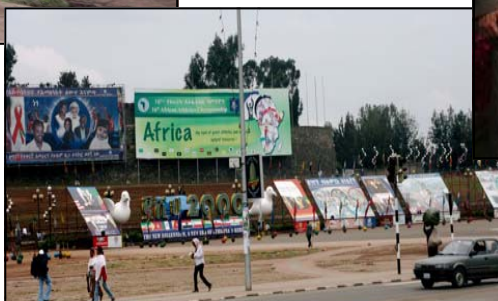
What Dr. Sherif is managing to do with very little resources is impressive. Most of the resources required are laboratory and blood bank. Different subspecialties have different issues, but similar challenges exist with regards to resources. Ahmed Coovadia from Canadian Blood Services is excited to partner with AAU and has already helped various countries with their blood bank systems. Dr. Alden Chesney from hematopathology who attended the evening is also excited to help build pathology infrastructure.



DOM faculty and Dr. Abdulaziz A. Sherif



Dr. Gena Piliotis and Dr. Abdulaziz A. Sherif



Canadian Delegate in Ethiopia. June 2008 Conference to help build higher education at AAU