

Diversity and Inclusion in Medical physics in Africa

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Conflict of interest

- None - save for the fact that I work as a radiation oncologist in Tanzania – Africa where the profession of medical physics is not yet fully recognized

Purpose of my Presentation

- To capture the breadth and depth of the challenges that Africa faces in medical physics
- To highlight medical physics challenges in Africa and the need for D&I
- To Serve as a call for action

Facts about Africa-1

- 54 sovereign states
- (49 UN members).
- Population: One Billion
- (15% of World's population).
- All countries have Radiological (X-ray) equipment

Facts about Africa

- Radiotherapy equipment/centres in 25 countries
- Nuclear medicine equipment -in 20 countries
- Sophisticated imaging – in 10 countries
- Number of medical Physicist very limited

Medical Physicists in Africa

- Total **351** (DR -70 NM -54 RT -227)
- Compare with**
- IOMP- 12,000 members in 1991 and 18,000 members in 2011
 - Medical physics societies 41 in 1991 and 82 in 2011

What can Africa do to address this shortfall?

- Put in place diversity & Inclusion policies
- Efforts which are intentional, active and ongoing must be made to engage with and leverage diversity and inclusion.
- African Medical Physicists and other stakeholders must challenge the unacceptable situation
- But this is not easy.

What is diversity ?

Diversity is the *description* or *recognition* of the dimensions of difference and similarity that exist in a community or organisation, such as gender, race/ethnicity, age, culture, religion, economic status/class, language, disability, sexual orientation, nationality, job role/position, and education, among many others. It is simply a noun, a description of differences and similarities that people use to identify themselves (individually or within a group) or others.

What is inclusion

Inclusion is an *action* or a *practice* aimed at intentionally creating an environment that leverages diversity without reducing individuals to categories that need to be managed. The focus on inclusion re-orientates diversity management. Diversity policies that ignore the concept of inclusion can actually create the opposite effect, i.e. instead of resulting in high performing teams, it can cause resentment and inter-group conflict

Does Africa have policies for D&I of Medical physics

- **No- it have exclusion policies-** *to exclude* is “to deny someone access to a place, group or privilege; to keep something out; or to remove from consideration.” It is “to prevent someone from doing something or being part of a group; to leave out; or to think something is not worth attention. **This leads to the challenges which Africa faces in MP.**

Medical physics challenges in Africa-1

- Lack of professional recognition by health authorities and hospital managers, especially in imaging
- ,Lack of medical physics education programme, especially structured and supervised clinical programmes, continuous professional developments, and accreditation and certification

Medical physics challenges in Africa-2

- Lack of medical physics education programme, especially structured and supervised clinical programmes, continuous professional developments, and accreditation and certification.
- Lack of recruitment of female candidates in the field of medical physics

Actions to ensure recognition of MP

- Create Specific Working Groups to assist in increasing visibility of Medical physics in Africa
- Organize Workshops for policy makers and managers
- -Establish and support medical physics organizations in Africa

Actions to increase under standing of the role of MP.

- Organize workshops for oncology and imaging stakeholders in Africa
- Develop a strategic plan for Medical Physics Professional Development in Africa.
- Solicit endorsement of the plan by policy makers .
- Put in place D&I policies in Africa

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Actions to address medical physics education in Africa

- Request AAMP to help in establishing educational courses
- Request AAMP to provide Training materials and libraries
- Request AAMP to Support young scientists
- Request support from IAEA IOMP etc

THANK YOU –ASANTE

Final Note

- The test of progress in medical physics globally is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much : it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little in Africa.
