

African Society of Human Genetics
Annual General Meeting
Fourth Annual Meeting
3-5th June 2006
International Livestock Research Institute
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Present:

Scott Williams (SW), Oliyemi Omotade, Bongani Mayosi (BM), Bert Ely, Ambroise Wonkam, Raj Ramesar (RR), Cecile Julier, Branwem Hennig, Alice Matimba (AM), Amerline Occean (AO), Abdelbadea Ahmed (AbA), Charles Epiphany Wani, Riad Bayoumi, Yekia Gad (YG), Amal Mohammed (AM), Olukemi Amodu, Pauline Osamor, Gail Davey (GD), Manal Fadl, Hiba Mohamed, Muntaser Ibrahim (MI), Adebowale Adeyemo (AA), Giorgio Sirugo, Abdel Badeih, Niven Silah, Charmaine Royal (CR), Duncan Ngare (DN), Georgia Dunston, Huda Abdella El Tahir, Nuha Mohammed, Wigdan Azrag, Sara Elsir Mohammed, Erwin Schurr, Christine Wasunna, Mai Abdel Rahman Masri (MARM), Abdalla Teia Juma, Neil Bradman, Ommniyah Almansor, Nahid Awad Alsed Eid, Abier Elzien, Ayman Hussein, Mohamed Ahmed Salih, Sylvester Kajuna (SK), Nazik Elfadil Abdullah, Hami Ishag, Felix Okojie, Charles N Rotimi (CNR, Chair), Melanie Newport (MN Secretary).

1) President/Chairman's opening comments

CNR welcomed everyone to the AGM¹ and expressed excitement at the activity in the field of genetics in its broadest sense) on the continent of Africa as evidenced by the presentations so far at the meeting. New members were welcomed and there was a round of applause for the success of the Society so far. The executive committee was introduced.

2) Secretary's overview of the Society

For the benefit of new members MN summarised the history and aims of the Society, referring to the announcement published in Nature Genetics² and the mission statement which is available on the website (www.afshg.org). The Society is a non-profit making organisation that is registered in the USA.

3) Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the 2005 AGM (available on the website) were summarised for the benefit of those not present last year and were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

4) Matters arising from minutes

- Sustainability of the AfSHG – the Society has opened a bank account with Citibank in Washington DC. Fundraising remains a problem (see separate item below) and appointment of an administrative secretariat will not be possible until we re more secure financially
- Other matters arising related to the journal will be addressed below

5) Next years meeting

Venue

In keeping with the Society's decision to rotate the annual meeting through the four regions of Africa, the next meeting should be held in North Africa. Members from Egypt (AM and YG) offered to host the meeting in Cairo and gave a short presentation in support of this proposal. There are many active geneticists in Egypt, and it is a regional hub for other North African countries. The newly formed National Society for Genetics (NSG) will hold its first annual meeting at the end of 2007 and the conference facilities at the National Research Center (NCR, the proposed conference site) are suitable in terms of central location, meeting facilities and accommodation.

¹ 120 people registered representing 16 different countries (10 African – Ethiopia, Sudan, Egypt, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Cameroon, Nigeria, The Gambia -, plus UK, USA, Canada, France, Italy, Switzerland). Delegates from Ghana, Mali and Zambia were expected but unfortunately could not travel at the last minute.

² Rotimi, CN. Inauguration of the African Society of Human Genetics. Nature Genetics (2004) 36:544. Included in the meeting programme.

Internet facilities are good (e.g. can support internet training workshops). Professor Gad expressed the Egyptian NSG commitment to financial support for members of the AfSHG though the exact nature and amount of this support is to be determined. It was noted that a joint meeting with the NSG is in keeping with our aim to hold our meetings in partnership with a regional genetics/medical organisation. No other proposals were received regarding alternative venues. SW proposed and BM seconded the motion that our 5th Annual meeting will be held in Cairo, Egypt, in partnership with the NSG. The motion was carried unanimously. AM and YD were honoured to accept to host the meeting in Cairo.

Date

It was proposed that the meeting should be held between mid October and mid November 2007 – this suggestion takes into account the need for extra time to fund raise for the meeting, and to avoid clashes with academic and religious commitments (e.g. Ramadan before this period, end of academic year for some after this period etc). This motion was passed by the majority. The organising committee for the meeting will finalise the dates and let members know. A three day meeting over a weekend would allow the most members to participate.

Funding

See below.

Theme

This will be discussed in more detail by the Organising Committee in partnership with the NSG and suggestions from members are welcome.

Organising and Program Committees

Time constraints were such that this was not discussed at the AGM but the President subsequently made the following recommendations:

Organizing Committee

Adebowale Adeyemo
Gail Davey
Melanie Newport
2 Egyptian or other North African Scientists
Charles Rotimi (ex-officio)

Programme Committee

Raj Ramaser
Muntaser Ibrahim
Giorgio Sirugo
Gail Davey
Melanie Newport
2 Egyptian or other NA Scientists
Charles Rotimi (ex-officio)

6) Funds

The Society has severe financial problems – we do not have sufficient funds in the bank - and currently is dependent on membership fees for a lot of its income. The Annual Meetings, the main expenditure, have been supported by grants and this year an application to NIH was favourably received but unfortunately was not reviewed by the board in time for the meeting so the amount of the award and when it will be paid was not known before the meeting. DeCODE genetics pledged \$5000.

Membership fees were reviewed:

Institutional \$250
Individual outside Africa \$100
Individual inside Africa \$20
Students free

Members must remain active and renew their membership every year. However, it was acknowledged that there are technical problems with payments. Credit cards charge up to 15% and it is costly to transfer money into the US bank account from outside.

Two suggestions: regional representatives collect money from members in their regions and we investigate the possibility of opening a bank account with a bank that accepts electronic transfers

and has branches throughout Africa (e.g HSBC). The Executive Committee will investigate the options.

A database of members needs to be developed (action MN and AA). New members are also needed. This can then be used to generate reminders for membership renewal.

Outside membership, we need to identify other sources of potential funding e.g. the African Union, Scandinavian Organisations etc. A fundraising committee was established comprising EB, DN, SK and YG. All members were encouraged to support this committee by supplying information.

7) The journal

Progress establishing the journal has slowed recently and this is due to our failure as an organisation to provide a list of 500 potential readers. RR offered to circulate all members of the SASHG and YG the North African geneticists. A letter will be drafted and circulated to all members for forwarding to potential readers, who will be invited to respond giving permission for their name to be used. We can also use this as an opportunity to expand our membership.

8) Students

Student participation in the society is essential for sustainability and their contribution to this years meeting was acknowledged. Senior investigators were encouraged to bring their students to the meetings and the President proposed that prizes will be awarded at next years meeting for the best student presentations. The prizes will cover travel costs allowing students to attend the next annual meeting. The Society hopes in future to support fellowships allowing students to spend time training in other labs and also workshops for students. A list of research interests of members will be posted on the website and students were encouraged to network more with senior members. A student committee was established comprising AbA, AM, AO and MRSM.

9) The Website

AA gave an overview of the website and asked for suggestions from members as to how they thought it could be improved. Access to a database of members, posting of useful website links and various guidelines e.g. ethics. Data of interest can also be posted. We may need to develop a password system. There is plenty of space and AA invited all suggestions to be sent to him by email.

10) Any other business

Ethics guidelines: It was proposed at last years meeting that ethics guidelines already prepared by other groups could be made available to AfSHG members via the website to aid development of their own guidelines. RR agreed to revisit this. The society needs an ethics sub-committee CNR suggested CR identifies a core group within the Society to take this forward.

Members were reminded that the listserv email list is public and if you reply to an email originating from there it will be seen by everyone on the list.

Professor Gad agreed to represent the North Africa region.

The numbering of the meetings was clarified:

1st Annual Meeting of the African Society was Ghana 2003

2nd Annual Meeting of the African Society was Washington 2004 (this was a planning meeting rather than a full scientific meeting)

3rd Annual Meeting of the African Society was South Africa 2005

4th Annual Meeting of the African Society is current meeting in Ethiopia

5th Annual Meeting of the African Society will be in Egypt in 2007

11) Next meeting

The next AGM will be held during the 5th Annual Meeting – in Cairo 2007.