

Susan G Komen for the Cure



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GHANA MISSION DELEGATION TRIP INAUGURATES SUSAN G. KOMEN FOR THE CURE®'S COMMITMENT IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

*Exchanging Ideas,
Pooling Resources,
Building New Medical Center*

*Part of Long-term Plan to
Address High Mortality Rates
in Africa*

Susan G. Komen for the Cure® expanded its mission to Africa this past October, targeting a continent with a staggering cancer burden and a disproportionate number of breast cancer-related deaths. Komen for the Cure, the global leader of the breast cancer movement, helped to establish the Ghana Breast Cancer Alliance at an international symposium in Accra, Ghana on Oct. 16 that was attended by leading experts from around the world.

The symposium was the opening event of an intensive, four-day mission delegation trip to Ghana, just one of several low- to middle-income countries where Komen's international program wants to reduce the high rates of breast cancer mortality.

Komen President and CEO Hala Modellmog led the Ghana delegation of physicians, researchers, advocates, survivors and celebrities, including actress Gabrielle Union, philanthropist Malaak Compton-Rock, wife of

comedian Chris Rock and breast cancer survivor and activist Billye Aaron, wife of baseball great Hank Aaron.

"Practicing culturally sensitive, practical healthcare diplomacy in Ghana is our first priority," Modellmog said. "By increasing public education and awareness as well as the acceptance of early detection practices, we hope to reach women at the earliest stage of the disease when treatment is most successful."

Breast Cancer in Ghana: A Complex Mix of Challenges

Symposium attendees from around the world learned about the complex mix of issues that stand as obstacles for Ghanaian women who need breast health and breast cancer care. Depressingly, nearly 70 percent of Ghanaian women who do seek help and are diagnosed with breast cancer have advanced forms of the disease. That makes it much harder to treat and survive. Social stigma surrounding breast cancer often forces many women there to keep their symptoms secret. Many die without receiving any treatment at all.

Reducing or eliminating that social stigma is the first major hurdle to decrease breast cancer deaths in Ghana and other low- to middle-income countries. Women fear being divorced or losing their share of family-owned property if they are diagnosed with the disease. As a result, few seek out treatment. When treatment is offered, it consists of mastectomy alone – an approach that reinforces the widespread belief among Ghanaian women, that, "first they cut off your breast and then you die anyway." Screening

mammography in Ghana virtually is non-existent.

Komen's global expansion efforts target parts of the world where high breast cancer incidence and mortality rates exist, along with political and economic stability and an attitude of readiness for change. Ghana is an example of such a country that is poised to work with Komen to improve the breast health of its citizens.

Delegation member Dr. Benjamin O. Anderson, director of the Breast Health Global Initiative (BHGI), co-founded and co-sponsored by Seattle-based Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and Susan G. Komen for the Cure, calls the mission to Ghana "good preparation for what lies down the road; namely, a potential breast cancer tsunami."

"With the right mix of resources, communication and collaboration, countries like Ghana can put in place the systems that are necessary to prevent the needless breast cancer deaths of thousands of women," said Dr. Anderson.

New Specialty Hospital Dedicated In Ghana

The Komen delegation then traveled to Kumasi on Oct. 17 and was joined by President John Kufuor for a dedication ceremony at the new hopeXchange Medical Center, a state-of-the-art medical, diagnostic and treatment facility. This new facility will offer accessible and affordable breast health services. It will also house an interactive learning laboratory of the Breast Health Global Initiative, where doctors and scientists not only share critical information on early

detection and treatment but also offer continuing medical education courses to healthcare providers in Ghana. The breast cancer unit at the hopeXchange Medical Center will open first. Infectious disease, facial malformations and ophthalmology units will follow.

The Lab: Learning, Collaborating, Tracking Data

Learning laboratory Kumasi Hope is BHGI's first such installation. Developing breast cancer continuing education curricula for the needs of Ghanaian medical personnel is a top priority. Dr. Anderson will lead an international multi-disciplinary team that includes local health officials to develop, apply and test curricula based upon the published BHGI "Guidelines for International Breast Health and Cancer Control Implementation." This expert team will teach breast health care and breast cancer biology and will discuss ways to overcome the limited resources that exist in Ghana and other low- and middle-income countries.

BHGI will work closely with hopeXchange and high-level Ghanaian governmental and health officials to create a center providing breast health learning experiences that reflect this country's unique cultural, economic and political realities. In its second phase, the learning laboratory plans to work with civil authorities to study and implement a citywide hospital-based breast cancer registry in Kumasi, with the full direction, collaboration and approval of the Ghana Ministry of Health.

Cancer registration plays a pivotal role in cancer control strategies. According to the 2006 report on cancer registration in Ghana by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), Kumasi is one of only two geographical areas in Ghana where a population- or hospital-based cancer registry could be effectively established, due to the availability of appropriate cancer diagnosis and management facilities.



Komen President and CEO Hala Moddemog speaking at the International Breast Cancer Symposium in Ghana

About Susan G. Komen for the Cure®

Nancy G. Brinker promised her dying sister, Susan G. Komen, she would do everything in her power to end breast cancer forever. In 1982, that promise became Susan G. Komen for the Cure and launched the global breast cancer movement. Today, Komen for the Cure is the world's largest grassroots network of breast cancer survivors and activists fighting to save lives, empower people, ensure quality care for all and energize science to find the cures. Thanks to events like the Komen Race for the Cure®, we have invested more than \$1.3 billion to fulfill our promise, becoming the largest source of nonprofit funds dedicated to the fight against breast cancer in the world. For more information about Susan G. Komen for the Cure, breast health or breast cancer, visit www.komen.org or call 1-877 GO KOMEN.