

AOOF HEALTH OUTREACH IN NIGERIA

By Dr. Titilola Akinremi, MD

Health Education and Screening are two major weapons that are established and effective for prevention of common chronic diseases in any community. In Nigeria, health care to the general populace mainly depends on local, state and federal government established health centers and hospitals. There is no health insurance system so people pay fully out of pocket for health services. The official minimum wage is N6,500/month (~\$45) so preventive health care is not priority for the people while treatment is expensive. Apart from this, most of the populace is ill informed about prevention. Government's priority is on communicable diseases like malaria and HIV. Non-communicable diseases just came on the National Health Plan in 2003, but no definite plans for prevention are in effect.

These are the reasons why AOOF is committed to taking preventive interventions of health education and screening to the populace. Fortunately the people are always hungry for education and help, especially when it is free. Our outreach has seen a doubling in attendance in one year because the people are more informed about their health.

Health screening for different diseases have two basic intentions: to identify disease risk factors, and for early diagnosis, prevention and intervention. Chronic non-communicable diseases in Nigeria include hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, cataracts, glaucoma, and cancer. In children, sickle cell anemia is still a major killer and worm infestation is a communicable disease with far reaching results, especially anemia resulting in poor mental performance and growth. Most chronic diseases are usually diagnosed late, sometimes when treatment

will be worthless as in metastatic cancer, or when complications have set in as in stroke from hypertension.

In lieu of unavailable annual medical check-up, some basic laboratory investigations may lead to early diagnosis and prevention of major chronic diseases.

The most helpful are:

- Baseline hematology blood work up with genotype and blood group
- Urinalysis
- Blood cholesterol
- Blood glucose

Apart from these clinical examination may include:

- Blood pressure measurement
- Eye tests
- Cancer screening (PSA for men's prostate, Pap Smear and breast examination in women)

AOOF's three (3) days of health fair annually are dedicated to education and screening for these diseases, as well as provisioning vitamins and other preventive medications. After a screening exercise, positive cases are referred to generalists or specialists as needed for definitive treatment and follow up. Usually the greatest efforts in terms of commitment and finance are drawn at this stage.

We draw a lot of our support from the local general hospital, volunteer effort of many local medical practitioners, and commitment of supplies and funding from our supporters locally and abroad. Without this support and commitment, the goals of AOOF would be unattainable. Our deepest gratitude and wish for God's continued blessings on these wonderful people!

2005 HEALTH FAIR STATS

By Mrs. Yemi Omole

In 2005, AOOF's 3 Days of Health Fair was a resounding success. We had children healthcare events including de-worming and limited distribution of basic age-appropriate supplemental vitamins. In all, over 200 boys and girls were administered deworming medication and participated in the funfare events.

The adult events were more extensive than the previous year and included hypertension screening and care, diabetes screening and care, cervical cancer screening and care, breast cancer screening and care, prostate cancer screening and care, and limited supply of vitamins. In all, over 600 adults participated in the events.

Of the total adult participation, almost 70% were female. The lines were long and unrelenting during all the three days of the health fair outreach. About 30% of the participants had blood pressure in excess of 150/110 and many of these have diastolic readings in excess of 190! About 40% (200) of the participants were provided 30-day supply of high blood pressure medications, and many of them have been previously diagnosed with this disease. Of this group, 70 referrals were issued to the local hospital with limited follow-up privileges. It was clear that poverty and lack of access to affordable medical treatment was a primary reason for the high prevalence of hypertension among the people.

Most of the adult participants were screened for diabetes. Of those that participated, over 120 patient treatment were started, with 20 requiring referrals to

medical specialists.

Nearly 75% of the women participated in the cervical and breast cancer screening. The high level of participation may be attributable to the fact that we had an educational session, through public video showing at the local church, about the importance of cancer screening for women. This resulted in identifying three (3) positive cases of cervical cancer and 20 referrals for further review on breast cancer.

Of the men that participated in the prostate cancer screening, nine (9) of them were confirmed positive and granted referrals.

It was another very successful event! We ran out of stock and people kept coming. You can be sure of people coming everyday even if the event ran for the whole year!



People lined-up for hypertension screening

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Mailing Address
Street Number and Name
City, State 98765-4321

BUILD RATE
US POSTAGE
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PERMIT NO.
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