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ANARA NEWSLETTER

Official newsletter of The African Network and Registry for Assisted Reproductive Technology

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african network and registry for assisted reproductive technology

Dear Friends and Colleagues,
We are happy to bring you news from our African Network and Registry for Assisted Reproductive Technology in this 4th edition bulletin.

DATA COLLECTION 2019: more countries, more centres, more years, and more quality..

Over the last months, we have simultaneously collected data pertaining to 2015, 2016 and 2017 in order to catch up to more recent years. We received data from 58 centres in 17 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Centres in Libya and Namibia intend to submit data in future.

We are delighted by this growth of our registry and network and sincerely thank every centre and data manager. Not only did more countries and more centres respond to this year's call for data, but we are also observing an increase in data quality. Data are cleaner, more comprehensive, and the follow-up of pregnancies is improving even if still far from ideal.

Some centres are leading the way in submitting cycle-based data via our on-line software, while others are still acquiring this capacity. The latter is not so much a question of skill and willingness but more often of the amount of information available relating to past cycles. We are working closely with individual centres, providing support via email and skype, and continue to facilitate hands-on training.

We will now conduct a trend analysis for 2013-2017 and intend to submit this for publication before year end.

Representatives at the African Networks Meeting

STRENGTHENING OUR REPRODUCTIVE NETWORK(S)

In the spirit of the African proverb “If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together”, network leaders and members met in June to discuss the strengthening of our reproductive networks In Africa.

The meeting, held during the ESHRE annual conference in Vienna, Austria, was well attended and the discussion vibrant. Several national fertility societies were represented as were our three regional networks: GIERAF (Groupe Interafricain d’Etude, de Recherche et d’Application sur la Fertilité), AFS (African Fertility Society) and ANARA.

Two pillars of fertility care and ART in Africa were recognized and endorsed: ANARA as the network of ART centres and the data voice of Africa; and the AFS as the network of fertility societies, hence going forward as the African Federation of Fertility Societies (AFFS). Both networks will continue to function independently of each other but in mutual support.

This spirit of collaboration is reflected in the upcoming Fertility Africa Meeting which will be held in Cape Town 27-28 April 2020, jointly facilitated by SASREG (South African Society of Gynaecological Endoscopy and Reproductive Medicine), ANARA and AFFS.

It is a call for Africa to come together, to share science, to build and enjoy relationships within Africa and beyond, and to set goals for reproductive health and ART on our continent. The meeting will also see the election of AFFS office bearers based on a formal constitution. It is a unique and historical event that is not to be missed and we hope to personally welcome you.

For further information and to register, please visit fertilityafricameeting.org.

ART UTILIZATION: an indicator of access to infertility care

Prof. Silke at ESHRE 2019

Every person in every country has the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health (Article 12.1 of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights).

This human right obliges governments to provide health services which should fulfil four requirements: availability, accessibility (financially, geographically, and without discrimination), acceptability (being sensitive to culture, society, gender) and quality.

The extent to which health services are utilized is an indicator of overall access to care. ART utilization, usually expressed in cycles per million population per year, is therefore a proxy marker of access to fertility treatment. The importance of adopting ART utilization as indicator for access to fertility care, recognizing that it is the only measure we have at regional and global level, and using this indicator to monitor progress and advocate for better access was the theme of a presentation by the International Committee Monitoring Assisted Reproductive Technologies at the ESHRE annual meeting (Dyer et al, 2019).

It is in keeping with a key message from the Director-General of the World Health Organization, namely that "Reliable data are vital for assessing whether we are making progress toward that vision [highest attainable standard of health for all people in all countries], for highlighting areas of progress and for exposing where we need to change course" (Ghebreyesus, 2019).

Africa is the region with the lowest rate of ART utilization globally and furthest behind in the provision of fertility care. We have much work to do and a long way to go. ANARA is happy and privileged to be on this journey with you, the ART centres in our network; with you, our national and regional societies, and – as this is not only on an African but also global journey – with you, our sibling networks internationally including RedLARA, ICMART, ESHRE, IFFS, and others.

REFRENCES:
Dyer S et al, "Access to ART: Concepts, indicators, impact." Presented at the 35th Annual Meeting of the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology, Austria, Vienna 2019.
Ghebreyesus TA, World health statistics 2019: monitoring health for the SDGs, sustainable development goals. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2019.

MEETINGS IN AFRICA & BEYOND

Dr Anne Kihara, Prof Silke, and
Mrs Saphina Ngugi in Nairobi, Kenya

By the end of 2019, the ANARA team will have made fourteen visits to ten countries in Africa.
Since our last newsletter, Prof. Silke visited all ART centres in Nairobi, Kenya, to introduce the vision and mission of ANARA and invite participation. It was also an opportunity to meet with Dr Anne Kihara, President of the African Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, a strong advocate for reproductive health and firm supporter of generating scientific data in Africa for Africa. The visit ended with a well-attended meeting of the Fertility and Andrology Society of Kenya and the firm intention to build on the newly established relationships between ANARA, Kenyan ART centres, and FASK.

In September, Dr. Pavs and Ms. Liezel participated in a highly successful meeting of FERSOG and IFFS. Prior to this, they visited ART centres in Accra, Tema and Kumasi and provided on-site support in data management and collection. Shortly after, Dr. Pavs travelled to Cameroon to be with our friends and colleagues from GIERAF, joining their 7th International Congress.

ANARA, FERSOG and IFFS Faculty at the Workshop in Accra, Ghana

The quality of these scientific meetings, the spirit in which they were conducted, and the growing collaboration within and between countries reflect the enormous opportunities which are unfolding in infertility-related reproductive health in Africa.Beyond our region, we had opportunities to share our story - meaning the enormous need for infertility care in Africa, the challenges of providing such care, and how collaboration together with scientific data may contribute to progress – at a workshop at ESHRE and at scientific meetings in Japan and Canada.

GET TO KNOW YOUR AFRICAN NETWORK AND REGISTRY FOR ART

ANARA's mission lies not only in collecting data, but in bringing together people and in bringing together Africa. It is this coming together of people, data, and Africa that captures the spirit of ANARA. To strengthen this togetherness, we need to know each other, we need to tell, listen and understand our "stories". We will therefore invite network participants to tell with a few words or pictures a story from their country about infertility, ART, and ANARA for future inclusion in our newsletters.

To start, we are sharing the images below telling you about the ANARA operational team in pictures rather than words. Suffice to say, we love our work in the ANARA engine room!

Ms. Liezel, ANARA Data Assistant handling incoming data while donating platelets.

Dr. Pavs, ANARA Clinical Assistant formatting this Newsletter on a train in India, travelling to the Himalayas.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

We wish to thank the South African National Research Foundation, Ferring Pharmaceuticals, Merck, and the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Cape Town, our hosting institution. Their support helps us to maintain our software, facilitates our travel and workshops, and allows us to keep network and registry participation free of charge.
With the exception of our part-time network coordinator, sponsorship does not involve personal remuneration of the ANARA Operational team.

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Newsletter compiled by Silke Dyer and Paversan Archary on behalf of the ANARA Operational Team.

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