Ensuring Evidence Based Policy Decision Making In Ghana

Martha Gyansa-Lutterodt, Ministry of Health, Accra, Ghana

I am particularly grateful for the opportunity to take part in the ISPOR 14th Annual ISPOR European Congress and I sincerely thank ISPOR for the opportunity.

I must say I had been particularly worried about our inability to assess the effectiveness of our health technologies using evidence to ensure value for money in Ghana. The selection processes for our essential medicines and other pharmaceuticals requires more robust evidence with appropriate systematic reviews to support the processes as a cost containment measure.

I was amazed at the pool of evidence that was available and was virtually overwhelmed with the different papers of interest which occurred in parallel sessions, thus making it impossible for me to attend all of the sessions at the Congress. I found the Congress Personal Scheduler useful in helping to make ‘cost effective’ choices in selecting sessions. I am looking forward to working with my colleagues to gather the necessary evidence to ensure ISPOR Ghana becomes viable to support our National Health Insurance Scheme in becoming more sustainable [1]. The externalities of the Congress are the huge networks which provided the opportunity to open important communication lines for appropriate partnerships for countries like Ghana and individuals requiring assistance in their areas of interest. I believe these collaborations and partnerships are nurtured for ‘win – win’ situations to increase access to health in low and middle income countries with value for money collaborations to be taken forward.

The Ministry of Health in Ghana, in its medium term strategic plan for 2011-2013 [2] in the area of improving institutional care and mental health under health objective 5, is exploring cost-effective methods of ensuring health commodity security to improve health outcomes. I look forward to supporting actions in the area of evidence based policy workings in the area of health technology assessments and also building capacities in Ghana with the appropriate skills and competences to move the health agenda forward.

I am indeed very grateful for this opportunity and I am happy I was part of the ISPOR 14th Annual European Congress and look forward to future participation in ISPOR activities.

References
1 Ministry of Health Sector Review 2010: Moving from Strategies to Action.
2 Ministry of Health Medium Term Strategic Plan 2011-2013.

Bridging Knowledge and Practice Gaps and Sustaining Pharmacoeconomics and Outcome Research in Nigeria

Kehinde Onasanya, BPharm, MSc, Non-governmental organization Management Sciences for Health, Abuja, Nigeria

I feel honoured to be one of the recipients of a 2011 ISPOR Meeting Travel Scholarship Award and attending the ISPOR 14th Annual European Congress which was held on 5-8 November 2011, in the beautiful city of Madrid, Spain.

I commend this laudable initiative as it opens up new frontiers of knowledge and networking opportunities to upcoming talents and experienced professionals in the field of pharmacoeconomics and outcomes research. Additionally, it is a way of ensuring renewed interests and raising a new cadre of professionals in this subject matter.

During the Congress, I attended three short courses: Introduction to Modelling, Applications of Pharmacoeconomics Modelling and Conjoint Analysis-Theory and Methods. From these three courses, I gained valuable knowledge that will be of immediate application and relevance to pharmacoeconomics and outcomes research in Nigeria.

In addition, I gained transferable skills and experience from the plenary sessions on the pros and cons of a centralized European pricing and reimbursement agency. This topic is of particular relevance to Nigeria as it is seeking to roll out appropriate benefit packages under its National Health Insurance Scheme.

After attending this conference, I seek to develop the capacity of Public Sector Institutions and Civil Society Organizations in the use of pharmacoeconomics and outcomes research by decision makers and other stakeholders in health institutions in Nigeria through scheduled trainings, meetings and forums. Over time, I feel this should translate into increasing and improving the use of health resources in an equitable and cost effective manner by mainstreaming pharmacoeconomics and outcomes research principles into processes of drug selection, drug formulary management and procurement decisions, as well as other areas. A step-down training approach through the ISPOR Nigeria chapter meetings, conferences, and updated lectures in pharmacy schools across Nigeria will also be explored.

In conclusion, I would like to use this opportunity to once again express my gratitude to ISPOR for awarding me this grant and giving me such a wonderful experience. We all strive to allocate resources in a just manner, providing the maximal quantity and quality of evidence-based services for the society. I honestly believe that creativity and exceptional efforts could be hidden in developing nations. To that end, I strongly support further ISPOR investments in experts worldwide that reside in such areas because the potential for change and improvement is enormous. The knowledge gained by local opinion leaders can mean a lot to these communities providing bold steps forward.

Acknowledgement
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in its infancy stage [1] and a wide gap often exist between knowledge and practice to deliver cost-effective and efficient healthcare to the populace. A growing interest and force, however, is gathering with the establishment of the ISPOR Regional Chapter in 2009. Now, a cadre of professionals has been created to sustain this initiative and promote its ideals to benefit the society at large.

I truly appreciated the opportunity to participate in the ISPOR community and feel honored to have been awarded an ISPOR 2011 Meeting Travel Scholarship Award. The Congress was an opportunity for me to upgrade my knowledge in basic pharmacoeconomic methodologies and techniques in outcome research. The ISPOR Congress was the biggest and most impressive event I have ever attended. I met interesting people and engaged in resourceful discussions. During the Congress, I attended three short courses and many other important sessions. The workshop on "Network Meta-Analysis in Relative Effectiveness Research" was especially valuable for me. I learned about indirect and mixed-treatment comparisons, about the use of different types of outcomes and other methods that should prove essential during my work. The methods discussed throughout the workshop are very useful for countries where randomized clinical trials are not practiced. I was also interested in taking "Advanced Retrospective Database Analysis," because a retrospective design is utilized by my studies. The opportunity to attend short courses and workshops afforded me a chance to acquire knowledge from the world’s leading experts. The Congress provided a lot of educational poster and podium presentations as well. I hope to submit one of my own studies to ISPOR in the future.

I was impressed by the intensive work of the ISPOR staff. They were quick in responding to all inquiries and questions during the organization of the Congress. With my three years of research experience, I can state that every health care professional should know the basic principles of health economics analysis. As this was my first ISPOR congress, I wanted to maximize every opportunity at my disposal. I felt privileged to be able to attend three short courses. Two of these courses were just introduced by ISPOR, thus making me one of the pioneering students for those short courses. As a new researcher, my quest is to do quality research through good methods, and so I selected the following short courses: 1) Introduction to Retrospective Database Analysis; 2) Advanced Retrospective Database Analysis; and 3) Conjoint Analysis – Theory and Methods. These courses provided exactly what I needed and met my expectations. The faculty members not only shared their knowledge but also their experiences from the field, which was very encouraging and made the sessions very practical. Participants were given the opportunity to contribute during and after the sessions. The Plenary Sessions, Issue Panels and workshops afforded me a chance to acquire knowledge from the world’s leading experts. The ISPOR Congress provided a lot of educational poster and podium presentations as well. I hope to submit one of my own studies to ISPOR in the future.

I am most grateful to ISPOR for supporting researchers from developing countries to learn and share experiences on such platforms. I hope the experience and knowledge I gathered will help advance the objectives of ISPOR in my region. I currently work at the Ministry of Health of Myanmar and I feel honored to have been awarded the ISPOR Travel Scholarship Award in November/December 2011. I am excited to attend the International Society for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research (ISPOR) 14th Annual Congress in March 2012 in Berlin, Germany. I have always been interested in the field of health economics and outcomes research. I was fascinated by the opportunity to attend the ISPOR Congress, which was an excellent platform to share my findings in my poster presentation, "Cost of Diabetes management to Cocoa Clinics in Ghana." I was also privileged to meet some key personalities of ISPOR.

In Armenia, this is particularly important for the governmental decision-making process as it is mostly based on approximate estimations. The need for adaptation and development of health technology assessments is obvious, since the health care system is in the process of developing and implementing reforms to make our health services more affordable and because most of the preconditions for the establishment of the Armenian medical insurance system include rationalization and minimization of widespread inefficiencies. I hope to bring my colleagues, who are engaged in pharmacoeconomics and public health, together to create a community in Armenia which will contribute to the goals defined by ISPOR. I believe that active cooperation will benefit not only health care professionals but patients also.

Striving to Implement Great Ideas for a Small Country
Anush Perikhanyan, MS, MPH, PhD candidate at Yerevan State Medical University Department of Pharmaceutical Management, Research Fellow at Cardiology Center, Yerevan, Armenia

I was overwhelmed by the publication of the recipients for the ISPOR 14th Annual European Congress Travel Scholarship Award in Madrid, Spain, which included my name, because I did not expect that on my first attempt, I would receive an award. As this was my first ISPOR congress, I wanted to maximize every opportunity at my disposal. I felt privileged to be able to attend three short courses. Two of these courses were just introduced by ISPOR, thus making me one of the pioneering students for those short courses. As a new researcher, my quest is to do quality research through good methods, and so I selected the following short courses: 1) Introduction to Retrospective Database Analysis; 2) Advanced Retrospective Database Analysis; and 3) Conjoint Analysis – Theory and Methods. These courses provided exactly what I needed and met my expectations. The faculty members not only shared their knowledge but also their experiences from the field, which was very encouraging and made the sessions very practical. Participants were given the opportunity to contribute during and after the sessions. The Plenary Sessions, Issue Panels and Workshops were all very well organized and the ISPOR staff were excellent in performing their duties. The ISPOR staff members were more than willing and readily available to provide assistance; credit to all the ISPOR staff members. The congress also gave me, for the first time, an international platform to share my findings in my poster presentation, "Cost of Diabetes management to Cocoa Clinics in Ghana." I was also privileged to meet some key personalities of ISPOR.

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Health/Pharmacoeconomics and Outcome Research: Evidence Required For Rational Health Care Decision Making in Developing Countries
Ernest Attuquaye Quaye, BPharm, MPH, Principal Pharmacist, Medical Department, Ghana Cocoa Board, Accra, Ghana

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