

Workshop report

WHO Sub-Regional Seminar on the Epidemiology and Community Control of Diabetes Mellitus in Africa

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At the initiative of the WHO Regional Office for Africa, a subregional seminar on public health aspects of diabetes mellitus was held from 24–28 April 1989 in Kinshasa, Zaire. The seminar was sponsored by WHO and INSERM Unit 21 – the WHO Collaborating Centre for Coordination of and Training in Clinical Research and Epidemiology in Diabetes, Paris, France.

Fourteen participants from nine countries in the Central African sub-region attended the seminar. Regional faculty members came from The Congo (Professor Mbadanga), Mali (Dr Niantao), Senegal (Professor Sow) and Zaire (Professor Kandingu). Both the WHO Regional Office for Africa and WHO Headquarters, Geneva were represented.

Topics presented in the seminar included a review of diabetes epidemiology, basic principles of epidemiology and medical statistics, intervention studies and their evaluation, approaches to community prevention and control, a literature critique and the preparation of a study protocol. Particular attention was paid to the African situation and it was acknowledged that there is still inadequate information on the

epidemiology of diabetes in Africa, particularly in the urban setting.

Following in the wake of the three highly successful international seminars on the epidemiology and public health aspects of diabetes held in Cambridge, United Kingdom (1981, 1983 and 1987) the Kinshasa seminar broke new ground in several respects. Not only was it the first such course to be held in Africa, it was also the first to be held anywhere outside Europe and the first to be conducted in the French language.

Participants enjoyed excellent facilities provided by the Zairean hosts. The success of the event is a testament to the growing recognition by both WHO and national governments in Africa of the threat of diabetes to the public health of developing countries.

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