
CONGRESS EDITORIAL

52nd SEMDSA Congress and 15th LASSA Congress: 5-7 May 2017

The Society of Endocrinology, Metabolism and Diabetes of South Africa (SEMDSA) was inaugurated in 1959. The first SEMDSA congress took place in 1966. The inaugural meeting of the Lipid and Atherosclerosis Society of Southern Africa (LASSA) was held in Johannesburg in September 1989. It is a great privilege to welcome you to this years' joint SEMDSA and LASSA congress taking place at the historic Wanderers club in Johannesburg from 5 – 7 May 2017.

Our congress kicks off with a pre-congress GP symposium that will cover a broad spectrum of endocrine topics conducted by local endocrinologists. In addition, this year will see the first pre-congress insulin pump and continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) workshop for endocrinologists that will take place on the 4th of May. As technology evolves and improves at a rapid pace, so too do the therapeutic options we are able to offer our patients. Whilst still in its infancy in South Africa, insulin pump therapy and CGM have the potential to revolutionise our management of diabetes. We are therefore fortunate that Dr Pratik Choudhary, from King's College London, will be conducting this workshop. Dr Choudhary has a keen interest in technology and diabetes and has conducted many workshops in the United Kingdom and Europe.

The congress is fortunate to have seven highly regarded international speakers who will deliver 14 plenary lectures as well as 12 Meet-the-Professor sessions over the three days. As diabetes remains a cause of significant morbidity and mortality in South Africa, various aspects of this disease will be discussed. Dr Choudhary will deliver an update on the use of technology in the management of diabetes and will provide us with a window to the future therapies of this condition. His second talk is titled "Management of hypoglycaemia unawareness - How Neuroimaging informs therapy" and will cover a challenging aspect of diabetes care. Prof Rayaz Malik from Manchester will focus on diabetic neuropathy, the leading cause of lower limb amputations in adults. His topics include "An update on the diagnosis and management of the diabetic triopathy" and "Challenges and solutions for the diabetic foot" as well as an interactive session on "Diagnosing and managing painful diabetic neuropathy."

Whilst microvascular complications and hypoglycaemia are important for many patients with diabetes, the burden of this disease remains cardiovascular mortality. Prof Robert Chilton is an interventional cardiologist from Texas who will discuss the interplay between the heart and diabetes by discussing new potentials for hypoglycaemic agents in cardiovascular disease and will appraise the cardiovascular safety of drugs used to treat type 2 diabetes. We then switch focus with Prof Matthias Blüher from the University of Leipzig who will challenge our beliefs about healthy adipose tissue and will conduct a much anticipated Meet-the-Professor session on "Aetiology based obesity treatment."

We are pleased to host two eminent physicians from Harvard University in Boston, USA. Prof Beverly MK Biller from the Neuroendocrine Unit at Massachusetts General Hospital is a world renowned expert on Cushing's syndrome. She will deliver the Bernard Pimstone Memorial lecture on this topic. In addition she will provide an update on acromegaly and will conduct an interactive session on interesting pituitary cases. Infertility is often a forgotten endocrine problem. Dr Ravikumar Balasubramanian is a physician-scientist in the Reproductive Endocrine Unit of the Department of Medicine at the Massachusetts General Hospital. He will cover aspects of male and female infertility and will deliver a plenary lecture on the genetics of puberty.

Our LASSA speaker, Prof Børge G. Nordestgaard (Copenhagen, Denmark), has for more than 25 years continued his interest in the pathogenesis, diagnosis and treatment of familial hypercholesterolaemia, hyperlipidaemia, atherosclerosis and cardiovascular disease, and has written extensively on these conditions. His two plenary lectures are titled "Triglycerides and remnant cholesterol in diabetes and cardiovascular disease" and "Lipoprotein(a) as a cause of cardiovascular disease." I am sure that you will agree that this eminent international faculty will broaden our horizons.

Showcasing local research has always been an important part of the SEMDSA congress and this year is no different. There will be in excess of sixty original abstracts that are sure to stimulate debate and discussion. While most of the research tends to be focussed on diabetes and obesity, other areas of endocrinology are somewhat neglected. We need to find innovative ways to support research in these areas so that we can generate local data to guide our clinical practice. I encourage you to support our young clinicians and researchers who may be presenting at a congress for the first time.

I would like to thank all members of the local organising committee for their input, advice, assistance and effort in putting together this meeting. We have to acknowledge all the support from our pharmaceutical and technology partners without whom this congress would not be possible. We thank them for their commitment to furthering endocrinology and diabetes research in South Africa. Special thanks and appreciation are owed to all our invited speakers who have travelled from afar to spend their valuable time with us. Hopefully they will remain our friends for years to come and like many of their predecessors will return frequently to South Africa. And lastly thank you to all the delegates who make this congress the highlight of the local endocrine calendar.

Nazeer Ahmed Mohamed

Chairperson: Local Organising Committee
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