



## AfSBT e-Newsletter



June 2016

Suddenly, Kigali and all its excitement, is over! We had a wonderful congress, as I am sure all who attended, will agree. The presentations will soon be put

onto the website – once this has been done, members will be advised by email.

Anyone who would like to share their experiences of the congress, are invited to do so by sending in an article for consideration, to me on email address [berylcynthiaarmstrong@gmail.com](mailto:berylcynthiaarmstrong@gmail.com). The number of words should not exceed 500, and be sure to add

your full name, job title and organization, plus home country. Photos are also welcome. We also welcome members to suggest items of interest for future issues of this newsletter. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Beryl Armstrong – editor*

### Introducing the Management Team:

- David Mvere
- Beryl Armstrong
- Rob Wilkinson
- Swaibu Katare
- Bright Mulenga
- Molly Gondwe

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## Opening Ceremony Speech: Kigali 31 May 2016



### Dr Jean-Baptiste Tapko, President: AfSBT

Honorable Minister of Health, Director General of the Rwanda Biomedical Centre, Deputy Directors General of the Rwanda - Biomedical Centre, AfSBT Board Members, Chairs of the - Organizing Committees, Sponsors, Participants,

#### Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the 8th International - Congress of the Africa Society for Blood Transfusion, in Kigali, Rwanda – jointly organized by AfSBT, the Ministry of Health of Rwanda and the National Blood Transfusion Centre.

First of all, I wish to thank the government of Rwanda for - accepting to host this important congress and for all the support provided to make the Kigali congress a great success.

AfSBT was created in Abidjan in December 1997 and its mission is to promote the highest ethical and professional standards in blood transfusion, in order to achieve safe and cost effective national blood programmes in the African Continent.

Since 1997 AfSBT has held 8 congresses including the Kigali congress. Initially our congresses were jointly organized with other Societies. But since 2009, with progress made over the years, AfSBT is now organizing its own congresses. These congresses have been very successful and are - attracting more and more people, with more than 350 delegates from Africa and beyond.

Honorable Ministers, ladies and gentlemen, we are very pleased to be in Rwanda today to hold our 8th International Congress in this beautiful city of Kigali.

I have personally been privileged to visit Rwanda several times; my first visit being in December 1994 as a WHO consultant, who was tasked to provide technical support in the rehabilitation of clinical laboratories and blood banks after the tragic events that we all know.

## Opening Speech *cont.*

Then I came here as the WHO regional advisor for blood safety in Africa, to support the development of the national blood policy and the national strategic plan for blood transfusion.

Today I am proud to come back in this beautiful city of Kigali, as the President of the Africa Society for Blood Transfusion and to witness the tremendous achievements that have been made during the last 20 years in all areas and more specifically in the area of blood safety, blood availability and accessibility.

Rwanda is demonstrating to the world that development is something that can be achieved when you have the right policies and the right people in place. This is an example to follow and we are here not only to exchange experiences on blood transfusion, but also to learn from the wonderful Rwanda experience.

The main theme of this congress is: **Sustainability of Blood Transfusion Services in Africa: where do we stand?**

Many African countries with the support of external partners, have established National Blood Services. But it is not uncommon to observe that, at the end of projects funded by external partners most these services are no longer capable to properly perform their functions, or just collapse.

The National Blood Service is an essential component of the National Health System. It contributes to reducing maternal and infant mortality. WHO states clearly that provision of safe blood to all patients in need, is the responsibility of governments.

But very often the budget allocated to this vital component of the National Health System by the ministries of health is either insufficient or nonexistent. This results in the shortage of safe blood and death of patients that could have been saved. In addition to that in the absence of well-organized and functional blood services, blood can transmit HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B and C and many other diseases that could have been prevented.

To contribute to the improvement of the safety and availability of blood in Africa the Africa Society for Blood Transfusion has developed The step wise accreditation project that is now been implemented in many countries including Rwanda. This is being done with the financial support of CDC. I wish to use this opportunity to thank CDC and our partners for their invaluable support to our efforts to achieve AFSBT goals.

AFSBT congresses give us a unique opportunity not only to share experiences, but also to discuss and propose strategies that will help ensuring safety, availability and accessibility to safe blood by all patients in need.

The Kigali congress is focusing as we highlighted earlier, on sustainability issues. This theme will guide our deliberations, and I have no doubt that we will come out with concrete recommendations on strategies and actions that will be implemented in our respective countries to make our blood services safe and sustainable.

Once more, I thank you all for coming, I thank our host country and its people for their warm welcome, and I wish you all a productive and enjoyable Congress.

## World Blood Donor Day

The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 1930 was awarded to Karl Landsteiner "**for his discovery of human blood groups**". Each year, on the anniversary of his birth (14 June 1868), voluntary blood donors all over the world are thanked for their gift of life. In Kigali, we also commemorated the day, at the close of the AFSBT Congress, on 3 June 2016.

**Blood Connects us All**

*Knowledge without wisdom is like water in the sand ~ Guinean proverb*

## Kigali perspective: *Karen Shoos, Guest speaker, AfSBT member, AABB representative*



Rwanda...the Land of a Thousand Hills and a Thousand Smiles. I have been to Rwanda multiple times since my first visit in 2006 as a member of AABB's PEPAR blood safety Technical Assistance team, but this trip was different. It was the opportunity to participate in AfSBT's 8th International Congress in an exceptional venue. We overcame the usual travel disruptions and settled into four days filled with stimulating sessions and the chance to connect with colleagues and dear friends from across the continent. Rwanda did her part to make the week memorable. The weather, from beginning to end, was perfect, the flowers were in full bloom, and the avocados in season! I hope every delegate took the opportunity to walk the conference neighborhood and the city, visit the Blood Centre and eat at one of the many restaurants.

The Scientific Programme offered a wealth of informative presentations. While it is impossible to single out a specific favorite, several sessions stood out. First, the excellent presentations on multiple research projects reinforced the critical importance of cultivating research capacity in Africa to address issues of relevance to patients on the continent. Second, the presentations on the challenges of implementing effective haemovigilance programmes contained useful pathways to meeting the AfSBT standard.

My schedule did not permit me to celebrate World Blood Donor Day with the delegates, or witness the wreath laying at the Genocide Memorial, but having visited the Memorial several times over the years, I understand the compelling message of hope that comes from unfathomable tragedy.

I am home with a head filled with wonderful memories, but three stand out for me. First, the Gala Dinner, with the mesmerizing music and dance performance and the Congress delegates in traditional dress. Second, my first Taxi Moto Ride. And third, the birth of Dr Katare's new son, "Congress", who honored our presence in Kigali.

Thank you Rwanda for welcoming us into your hearts!

## News on Prizes—Kigali

### ISBT ACADEMY DAY QUESTIONNAIRE – lucky draw

Lovetiita Umuraza: **Rwanda** Biomedical Center – NCBT won an AfSBT T-shirt, AfSBT branded fridge-magnet, copy of the publication *Introduction to Blood Transfusion Technology*, and a year's free membership of AfSBT.

### POSTER PRIZES as judged by the AfSBT Scientific Committee

Best English language poster: Mahmoud Rashad, **Sudan**

*Frequencies of ABO, RhD, K1 and K2 antigens among major Sudanese tribes*

Best French language poster: YM Sekongo, **Côte d'Ivoire**

*Anti-erythrocyte allo-immunization to sickle cell disease patients followed in transfusion therapy unit, NBTC, Abidjan*

Well done and congratulations to the two winners, who each won a tablet computer, donated by **SSEM Mithembu**.

### EXHIBITOR QUIZ – lucky draw

The prize was won by Gerda Esterhuizen, **South Africa**. It consisted of a notepad and pen donated by **National Bioproducts Institute (NBI)** of South Africa, hand wipes and a Calculator – Ruler.

### AfSBT RAFFLE – lucky draw for those taking out membership at the AfSBT stand

The prize was won by Dr Ahmad Makuwani, **Tanzania**, and consisted of a copy of *Introduction to Blood Transfusion Technology*, an AfSBT jacket, and AfSBT branded fridge-magnet.

### POST CONGRESS QUESTIONNAIRE – lucky draw

The prize was won by Mahmoud Rashad, **Sudan**, and was donated by **NBI** – a Kindle e-book reader, pen and notepad, and hand wipes.

*Next issue: photographs*

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## Upcoming events



**34<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the ISBT:** <http://www.isbtweb.org/about-isbt/congresses/>  
3-8 September 2016: Dubai, United Arab Emirates

**BBTS Annual Conference 2016:** <https://www.bbts.org.uk/bbts2016/venueandlocation/>  
21-23 September, Harrogate International Centre, North Yorkshire HG1 5LA, United Kingdom

**AABB Annual Meeting:** <http://www.aabb.org/annual-meeting/pages/default.aspx>  
22-25 October 2016: Orlando, Florida USA

**\*\*Check the AfSBT website, at [www.afsbt.org](http://www.afsbt.org) for more news items and alerts\*\***

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## Contact us

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*“Wealth diminishes with  
usage; learning increases  
with use.”*

*~ Nigerian proverb*

