

## PERSONAL STATEMENT: A.O. CHARWAY-FELLI: ILAE AFRICAN COMMISSION

I would be hard-pressed to say that I am an epileptologist. However, as a neurologist practicing in Ghana, where I have been for the majority of my professional life, one cannot deny how common it is to see a person living with epilepsy (PWE) having had none, or minimal, access to appropriate care and treatment options, until they are referred to see a neurologist after suffering multiple seizures or trauma caused by said seizures. Again, as a neurologist practicing in the African context the realisation that the people living with epilepsy that finally do get to our attention are but the tip of the iceberg is distressing.

The Epilepsy society of Ghana of which I am 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-president has been working with the WHO “Out of the Shadows” initiative in order to train more medical personnel a primary care level to be able to recognise and initiate appropriate therapy for PWE within their own environment.

Should I be elected to become a member of the ILAE African Committee, I intend to continue the work already being done in my capacity as first secretary-General, and current president Elect, of the African Academy of neurology to promote access to adequate neurological care for persons living with neurological disease in general and Epilepsy in particular.

My vision for improving access to care and ultimately reducing the treatment gap is through a multipronged approach including the following:

- Educational, awareness and anti-stigma campaigns at local, governmental, and regional levels aimed at the general public;
- Fostering/ facilitation of epilepsy recognition and management targeted at primary healthcare providers at community levels;
- Accentuation of epilepsy as a common nosological entity in medical and nursing school level and for continuing professional development programmes for healthcare providers of all levels through active engagement with local medical schools and healthcare authorities;
- Maintaining Epilepsy as a key component of local, regional, and continental medical and neurological congresses and conferences;
- Encouragement of healthcare workers (Nurses and Doctors) to specialise in Neurology and epileptology through demystification of the said subjects.
- Encouragement of research into the epidemiology of epilepsy in the light of a changing demographic landscape, and peculiarities of epilepsy relative to the African Context.

Ultimately the goal is for PWE to have access to adequate care irrespective of socio-economic status and geographical location. Whilst I will, no matter the outcome of this election, do all that is in my power to achieve the above objectives, I would nonetheless be amiss not to note that it will be of great help to achieve the same through cooperation with people having the same goals and with the support of the ILAE. As the African proverb goes: “*if you want to go fast – go alone; If you want to go far - go together*”. Far is the ultimate goal.

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