

PLEDGING COMMITMENT TO THE REDUCTION OF THE GAP OF LIMITED CARE OF PEOPLE WITH EPILEPSY IN AFRICA.

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The third child in a family of six, Dr. Angelina Kakooza is the only sibling pursuing a career in the science field. Her mother played a major role in getting her interested in science; by being an excellent role model instilling in her the values of hard work, willpower, self-confidence and adaptability.

Dr. Angelina Kakooza is a Neuro Pediatrician based in the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, School of Medicine at Makerere University College of Health Sciences. The bulk of her educational training has been from Uganda; however following her medical specialization degree in pediatrics she has attended several short courses in neurology and public health in diverse countries in Africa, Asia, United States and Europe. Her work involves teaching, conducting research and running a paediatric neurology clinic in which children with neuro-developmental disorders such as epilepsy, autism, cognitive impairments, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or cerebral palsy are managed. She feels that she identifies more closely with these patients having taken care of her youngest sibling with autism and epilepsy for over 20 years.

As a neuro pediatrician who has worked in sub-Saharan Africa for her entire professional career, she has extensive experience in the diagnosis of disorders affecting the child's nervous system. She has over the course of time developed a number of research collaborations with investigators from both resource rich and poor countries.

Her professional journey:

Dr. Kakooza undertook a neurology fellowship at Clinica Neurologica at the University of Bologna, Italy, in 2001 under the guidance of Prof. Paulo Tinuper, an expert epileptologist. On her return to the country she ably put to use the skills she had acquired by starting up studies on epilepsy and HIV/AIDS in the community. She presented some of these findings in a paper on "Factors associated with Epilepsy in Ugandan children with HIV/AIDS", *presented* at a Society for Neuroscientists in Africa (SONA)/ International Brain Research Organization (IBRO) Regional meeting in Capetown, South Africa 18- 22nd April 2005.

On the basis of this training she became an active participant in the IBRO funded African schools. She participated in the IBRO African Neuroscience Schools in Nairobi, Kenya and Capetown and Grahamstown in South Africa on various topics in basic, clinical and applied neuroscience. She was voted the Vice President for the 1st Advanced IBRO African Neuroscience School Alumni- and 6th IBRO African Neuroscience School Alumni-Vice President (September 2003-2004).The knowledge and skills she obtained in these courses as well as the networks she established helped her further her neuroscience career.

In 2005 she was awarded an International Scholarship Award by the American Epilepsy Society (AES) which was undertaken at Children's Hospital Boston and Harvard Medical School. Boston, Massachusetts, USA. Prof. Frances Jensen mentored and hosted her during her stay. While there she developed collaborations with US researchers to study herbal medicines in Epilepsy care as well as officials of the International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE) who encouraged her to set up a local chapter in Uganda.

She is the founder president of Epilepsy Society Uganda (EPISOU) a branch of the ILAE which shares the vision of working towards a Uganda where 'no person's life is limited by epilepsy'. The society has held joint educational meetings with the International Bureau of Epilepsy Uganda chapter to raise awareness and inform the public on epilepsy management; engaged in media conferences, talk shows, press releases and epilepsy clinics with the underprivileged persons and established connections with drug companies like ABBOTT in the USA to provide much needed medications like Sodium Valporate for the patients with epilepsy.

In her work she is closely involved in training post graduate and undergraduate medical and paramedical students on neurological disorders in children and has a dream to set up a fully fledged pediatric neurology department at Makerere University School of Medicine as she gradually builds the human resource capacity with other colleagues.

She was instrumental in setting up the first Visiting Lecture Teaching Programme (VLTP) IBRO course in Neuroscience at Makerere University College of Health Sciences Kampala, Uganda, held from February 16-24th 2005. In this course she developed networks with colleagues from the National Institutes of Health. This enabled her write up a grant to study Neurodevelopmental disorders in children in Uganda which was funded by the NIH and Fogarty under the Brain Disorders in the Developing World program.

Dr. Angelina was the principal investigator for the Ugandan site in the multisite study on Epilepsy to describe the epidemiology, treatment and outcomes in Africa named 'Studies of Epidemiology of Epilepsy in Demographic Surveillance Systems' (SEEDS). This project was a collaboration with Prof. Charles Newton, University College, London. (2008-2013). The results from these studies have been shared with the media and policy makers to inform on how best to care for the patients with epilepsy.

She has served as treasurer of the first Commission of African Affairs branch of the ILAE set up in November 2010 in Dakar, Senegal. She was also a member of the Educational Commission task force of the ILAE (2009-2012) and the task force created to develop guidelines for neonatal seizures, a joint collaboration with the World Health Organization and ILAE (October 2008 to April 2009). She is currently a board member on the Committee of Women in World Neuroscience (WWN) of the International Brain Research Organization (IBRO). With this organization she has won two grants, for the calendar year 2013 to hold a workshop on "Promoting the field of Neuroscience among women in Uganda" (geared to sensitize Ugandan women about joining the neuroscience field.) and for calendar year 2014 to support an activity on 'Development of a Mentorship Program in the Field of Clinical Neuroscience Among Women in Uganda'.

What does she have to offer for the CAA?

As a woman Dr. Angelina brings a unique perspective to her research and professional field that draws on:

- Experience gained over the years from her exposure to the health systems in countries in the developed world and developing world.
- Serving in different capacities in international and local neurology related organizations.
- 'Hands on training' from working with a variety of foreign and in-country collaborators in varied fields of clinical neurology.
- The established networks she has developed whenever she gets the opportunity to meet influential people in her field.

- Being female giving her better access to the populations of the children that she manages.

As a co-opted first Treasurer of the Commission on African Affairs in November 2010, I have demonstrated my ability of writing up annual budgets, monitoring and management of the allocated CAA funds and exhibited firm and committed leadership. If elected to serve another term (2014-2017), as an executive of the CAA, I will continue to develop and share my expertise in serving the ILAE and concretize the gains achieved over the past years in ensuring that we reduce the gap of limited Epilepsy care in Africa.



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