

The Gastroenterology and Hepatology Association of sub-Saharan Africa (GHASSA)

Established 2016

Approximately two years ago, the Gastroenterology Foundation of South Africa initiated discussions with a group of hepatologists from 15 sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries in order to form a Viral Hepatitis Advisory Board. The main aim at the outset was the drafting of guidelines for the screening, detection and treatment of chronic hepatitis B and C for the sub-region. These guidelines, which are in accordance with the WHO guidelines for the global elimination of chronic HBV and HCV by 2030, have been completed and adopted and are now ready to be published. The SSA Hepatologists, the SSA Hepatology Working Group, co-authored the document.

Moving on and building on the promise and goodwill generated by their work on the Hepatitis guidelines, Hepatologists and Gastroenterologists from across the sub-Saharan region discussed the idea of extending and formalizing their collaboration. This culminated in 2016 in the formation of an umbrella organization to be known as the Gastroenterology and Hepatology Association of sub-Saharan Africa (GHASSA). This Association will incorporate the Hepatologists and Gastroenterologists who work in the region and confront similar challenges in the course of their clinical practice and research. It is envisaged that GHASSA will engender the formation of other such working groups eg Crohn's and Colitis working Group, Acid peptic and H pylori working group, and so on as the interest arises.

GHASSA plans an affiliation with the World Gastroenterology Organisation (WGO) and talks have been initiated and are progressing well. As the founding and supporting organization and subsisting partner of GHASSA, the Gastroenterology Foundation of South Africa will continue as mentor extending its operations to cover the entire sub-region, but now as the Gastroenterology Foundation of sub-Saharan Africa.