

IBD Interest Group Meeting 2020

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The annual IBD interest meeting for 2020, held during the COVID-19 pandemic, took place at the Crystal Towers Hotel in Cape Town. This year there were only a handful of local people attending physically, while most people joined online. The sessions kicked off following a warm welcome and update by Prof Chris Kassianides on what the Gastroenterology Foundation of Sub Saharan Africa (GFSSA) has been up to, and what we can look forward to in the future with regards to education and collaborations, both locally and internationally, in the field of gastroenterology.

At this meeting we were re-introduced to the Extension of Community Health Outcomes (ECHO) project, which has been in existence for many years, but most of us heard about it with the start of lockdown in our country, when there was a boom in virtual meetings. The IBD-echo (subset of G-ECHO) meetings are in full swing and all academic centers in the country have been invited to actively take part, for the benefit of not only GI fellows, but for everyone involved in looking after IBD patients.

The introduction of the BRICS (**B**razil **R**ussia **I**ndia **C**hina **S**outh Africa) consortium by Professor Zhihua Ran was another announcement. The idea to establish this group came up at one of the international IBD conferences with several objectives, including provision of network support and to share and exchange information amongst specialists from the BRICS consortium. The consortium has already started with webinars that involve different IBD specialists, including from SA, Professor Gill Watermeyer. Be sure to look out for the invitation to these meetings from SAGES and let's all support this effort.

The meeting was made up of excellent talks from local and international speakers, including a key opinion leader in the field of IBD from India, Professor Vineet Ahuja, who addressed the important topic of treat to target when using biologics to treat patients with IBD. All speakers addressed important topics in IBD - some relating to current therapeutic protocols such as IBD guidelines when using newer biologics such as Ustekinumab and Vedolizumab and the use of JAK inhibitors in IBD pending registration. Surgical issues included the role of surgery in early Crohn's disease. Case presentations included an adolescent with complicated IBD, a case of thrombosis in a patient with IBD and a clinical challenge case of patients with IBD on biologics who have chronic kidney disease and are dialysis dependent.

David Epstein updated us on IBD Africa. There was a lot of discussion around the cases and all who attended took home some important lessons. We look forward to more meetings of this nature and to see all the collaborations between our societies and the international IBD community.

Thank you to the sponsors (Abbvie, Acino, Adcock Ingram, Equity, Ferring, Janssen, Takeda) for making the meeting possible.