



This year the Gastroenterology Foundation of South Africa celebrates its 10th anniversary. It is an appropriate time, therefore, to reflect on the achievements the Foundation has made over the past 10 years. It is an exciting time to be in South Africa and indeed in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. Looming over the horizon and well within our reach lies the birth of the Gastroenterology and Hepatology Association of Sub-Saharan Africa (GHASSA).

To begin with, the focus of the Foundation was on the continuing medical education of the practising gastroenterologist. It soon became apparent that this was not where our attention should be. Our fellows in training was where our attention shifted.

Over the last 10 years, we have awarded a number of fellowships - 13 in research, over 350 travel awards to local and international meetings, and 2 international fellowships, one to Brown University and another to Oxford University. A number of our fellows have benefitted from time spent at the VU Medical Centre in Amsterdam and we are grateful to Prof Chris Mulder for his support and interest in our post-graduate fellows over many years.

The Spier post graduate meeting is a three-day event held in February every year and devoted to the fellow in training. All medical and surgical gastroenterology fellows in the country are invited to attend together with paediatric gastroenterology fellows and those training in Hepatology. In addition, most heads of Departments throughout the country are invited to attend as faculty. The Spier meeting in 2016 attracted 36 fellows and 22 university heads of departments and was the largest attended meeting to date.

Beginning in 2012 the Foundation sponsored and facilitated meetings with regard to the registration of Hepatology as a subspecialty. In 2016 Hepatology was successfully registered as a subspecialty in South Africa.

The establishment of a number of subspecialty interest groups has sustained the practising gastroenterologist and those interested in Hepatology. The Liver and IBD Interest Groups are perhaps the most established and well attended. Notable visits in 2016 were Professor Ann Griffiths from Toronto SickKids and Professor Gyongyi Szabo, Past President of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD). Interest groups in a variety of subspecialties such as Acid peptic disease, Gut Microbiota, GI bleeding of obscure origin and Paediatric gastroenterology are held at various times throughout the

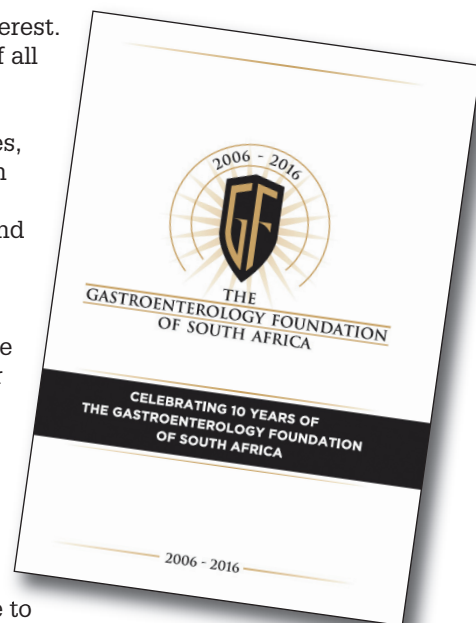
year according to interest.

Most gratifying of all is the successful collaboration with international societies, namely the American Gastroenterology Association (AGA) and the European Association for the study of the Liver (EASL). Thanks to the collaboration with Dr Peter Holt, past councillor at the AGA and presently at Rockefeller University, the Gastro Foundation brings the AGA post graduate course to

South Africa annually. Professor Marcus Peck, past president of EASL, was instrumental in bringing the Best of EASL to Africa in 2015. These courses are now being held in various centres in sub-Saharan Africa. Discussions are presently being held to bring the 'Best of UEGW' to South Africa in 2017.

Over the last 10 years, we have collaborated and have worked closely with SAGES since we share common goals. The Foundation hosts the AGA post graduate course at the annual SAGES conference together with a day devoted to Hepatology. In 2015 we hosted the first Best of EASL in Africa at the SAGES conference in Durban. The Twilight Symposium at SAGES offers an update on a broad range of topics given by our visiting speakers and since the symposium is held at the end of a conference day the occasion presents itself an opportunity for colleagues to catch up with each other whilst enjoying a glass of wine.

It is an indeed a great privilege, on behalf of the Gastro Foundation, to have honoured Professor Michael C Kew with a Festschrift Symposium at the SAGES congress this year. This symposium celebrated the formidable body of world-class research that he has produced and his reputation as an international leader in the field of liver cancer.



GASTROENTEROLOGY FOUNDATION

Of course, it is our travels into Africa and collaboration with a number of sub-Saharan African colleagues that has truly been an inspiration and a source of great satisfaction to all. In 2015 we hosted the Best of the AGA post graduate course in Ghana and in July 2016 we hosted the Best of EASL in Lagos, Nigeria. The hospitality, humility, and depth of intellectual resource in sub-Saharan Africa is truly astounding.

So where to from here and what can we expect from the Foundation in the next decade?

In September 2016, in collaboration with the Ethiopian Gastroenterology Society, we announced the sub-Saharan GI Hepatology working group at a meeting which will host the AGA post graduate course, the Best of EASL, a GI Endoscopy/ Capsule meeting and a Spier-like meeting for 30 sub-Saharan fellows. In addition, guidelines for sub-Saharan Africa, for the screening, surveillance and treatment of chronic viral hepatitis B and C were finalized under the auspices of the newly formed Sub-Saharan

Africa hepatology working group. Further guidelines, much needed for sub-Saharan Africa will almost certainly follow.

I am confident that a Gastroenterology and Hepatology Association of sub-Saharan Africa (GHASSA) will be up formulated in the next year or two with a strong constitution and earnest committee.

I am most grateful to all our colleagues who have supported the Foundation over the last 10 years, and to the Trustees who have contributed in making the Gastroenterology Foundation of South Africa a success. We are grateful for the generous support we have received and continue to receive from the pharmaceutical and device industry.

I look forward in the near future to the transformation of a Gastroenterology Foundation of sub-Saharan Africa.

Chris Kassianides
Chairman