



Letter to the Editor

## A testimonial of how The Pan African Thoracic Society Methods in Epidemiologic, Clinical, and Operations Research has impacted my career path: celebrating 15 years

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Received: 23 December 2021  
Accepted: 24 December 2021  
Epub Ahead of Print: 20 January 2022  
Published: 28 January 2022

DOI  
[10.25259/JPATS\\_42\\_2021](https://doi.org/10.25259/JPATS_42_2021)

Quick Response Code:



Dear Editor,

I wish to use this special issue that celebrates 15 years of the Pan African Thoracic Society Methods in Epidemiologic, Clinical, and Operations Research (PATS MECOR) program to share my testimony of how PATS MECOR has impacted my career. My current position as a consultant pediatrician and an Associate Professor at the College of Medicine, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, has been greatly shaped by my PATS MECOR experience.

The influence of MECOR on my career started with a position as an honorary research fellow at the Queen Mary University/Barts and the London Hospital, where I worked closely with Prof. Jonathan Grigg – a contact made on my behalf by Prof. Stephen Gordon after our Level 1 grant award in Malawi in 2008. With my 2011 American Thoracic Society MECOR grant award for a study on spirometric reference range in children in South East Nigeria, I got to own my first spirometer which was donated to me by the manufacturer through the influence of Prof. Sonia Buist (Mama MECOR). Following this, I won the prestigious young investigators award at the Conference International Paediatric Pulmonologist conference in Bangkok, Thailand, in July 2012 on an abstract for a study on health-related quality of life in children with asthma which I had developed during my PATS MECOR Level 1.

I started at PATS MECOR with no publication in 2008. My research interest was piqued and I have since moved from my first publication in 2010 “Practice of asthma management among doctors. African Journal of Respiratory Medicine 2010; 6: 14-17.” to 72 peer-reviewed publications in 2021.

I have been impacted by many faculty and colleagues from PATS MECOR but the most remarkable remains meeting Prof. Heather Zar at PATS MECOR Kenya in 2009. This meeting facilitated my venture to South Africa and my training in pediatric pulmonology. Heather Zar, despite being a high achiever and being so highly placed, her humility, acceptance of people, and her constant prodding, support, and encouragement made it possible for my colleagues and me to believe in ourselves and know that we too could become great exemplary and strong women leaders. She is one of my greatest mentors [Figure 1].

Following PATS MECOR, I am involved in tutoring, mentoring younger colleagues, and training undergraduate medical students and postgraduate residents in pediatrics and research. I am a Fellow of the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria with subspecialist board certification in pediatric pulmonology from the University of Cape Town South Africa, where

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**Figure 1:** Dr Ayuk with Prof Heather Zar following Subspecialty graduation from University of Cape Town South Africa.

I graduated with distinction. I am a fellow of the African Paediatric Fellowship Program. I am currently serving on the executive board/faculty of NTS, ERS, PATS, and other national and international bodies. I am a current subeditor (Pediatrics) of the Journal of the Pan African Thoracic Society and Paediatric Sectional Editor Nigerian Journal of Clinical Practice.

Since returning home from training in South Africa in 2018, I co-founded Little Lung Africa (LLA) – an ambulatory specialist pediatric pulmonology and allergy clinic in Enugu, Nigeria. LLA offers affordable services such as bronchoscopy, allergy skin prick testing, and spirometry which were hitherto unavailable. LLA also runs courses and has delivered six respiratory skills courses on TB, allergy, spirometry, and non-invasive ventilation training. The capabilities to do all these were nurtured during PATS MECOR.

#### **Declaration of patient consent**

Patient's consent not required as there are no patients in this study.

#### **Financial support and sponsorship**

Nil.

#### **Conflicts of interest**

There are no conflicts of interest.

**How to cite this article:** Ayuk AC. A testimonial of how The Pan African Thoracic Society Methods in Epidemiologic, Clinical, and Operations Research has impacted my career path: Celebrating 15 years. *J Pan Afr Thorac Soc* 2022;3:6-7.