



TB patient waiting room at one of Abidjan's largest anti-tuberculosis centers, CAT-Adjame.

productivity and maximize the results of laboratory capacity-building efforts, and at the February 2008 GLI Meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, it was determined that this initial multiorganizational partnership between ASM, CDC, FIND, and WHO for TB laboratory capacity building in Côte d'Ivoire would serve as a demonstration project for adopting a GLI approach in resource-poor countries.

This past April 2008, C. N. Paramasivan, Head of TB Laboratory Support for the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND), Veronique Vincent, Scientist in the TB Strategy and Health Systems Branch of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Stop TB Department, ASM consultant Gabriela Torrea, and ASM International Affairs Program Manager Mah-Sere Keita Sow traveled to Abidjan and joined CDC GAP Cote d'Ivoire's Christiane Adje-Toure, Chief of the Lab Branch, Andre Tehe, Lab Coordinator of Clinical Biology, and Alexandre Ekra, Chief HIV Care and Treatment Branch, for a week of site visits and meetings.

During the week, the interorganizational team presented its recommendations for moving forward with the capacity-building efforts, and consensus was reached among the national stakeholders on the next steps. Of utmost priority is for the PNLT to gather baseline data to enable development of specific lab-related activities and elaboration of a capacity-building plan including precise human resource, infrastructure, and equipment needs and for the NTRL to take the lead in establishing a Laboratory Steering Committee with representation from all national stakeholders and key partner organizations.

ASM consultant Gabriela Torrea has since returned to Cote d'Ivoire, where she spent 3 weeks between the end of April and early May to assist the PNLT with the initial data collection and conceptualizing an improved external quality assessment program for AFB smear microscopy.

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International Conference on Health Laboratory Quality Systems, WHO/Lyon

In an era of outbreaks such as the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and the threat of avian flu, there is an urgent need to address the accuracy and timeliness of laboratory diagnostics. Resource-limited countries have been challenged to implement laboratory quality systems as well as national quality standards. In an effort to address these areas, the World Health Organization (WHO) Lyon Office for National Epidemic Preparedness and Response, in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Atlanta, Ga., held an International Conference on Health Laboratory Systems in Lyon from 9–11 April 2008. This conference, which brought together approximately 200 international experts from more than six countries, sought to enhance health laboratory quality, particularly in resource-limited settings, and to propose guidance on quality systems development and implementation at national level. Keith Klugman, International Committee Chair, convened a session on "Development of National Laboratory Policies and Standards to Support Quality Systems."

The conference centered on discussions on why quality systems are essential for good laboratory practices, how to institute integrated quality systems in the national laboratory systems, and the successes and

challenges in implementing quality standards.

A highlight for ASM at the conference was the participation of Kaw Bing (Paul) Chua, whose attendance was sponsored through an ASM International Request for Assistance (IRFA). Chua is currently serving as a consultant clinical virologist in the National Public Health Laboratory in Kuala Lumpur, where his primary role is to set up a world-class diagnostic virology laboratory and a state-of-the-art biosafety level 3 laboratory complex. Throughout Chua's career, he has contributed to solving a number of outbreaks of emerging infectious diseases in Malaysia, including hand-foot-mouth disease outbreaks in 1997 and 2000; an outbreak of Chikungunya in Klang valley in early 1999; an outbreak of Nipah virus in 1998/1999; and discovery of the Pulua virus.

Chua noted that infectious diseases, especially those due to the emergence of novel pathogens leading to outbreak and transboundary spread, pose great challenges to health care laboratories. The national public health care model must include the most cost-effective means of supporting national (and regional) public health goals and addressing infectious diseases, especially as related to emerging infections, surveillance, and outbreak investigation.

Membership

Faces of ASM—Marian C. Johnson-Thompson

ASM has a membership that is rich in its diversity. It includes individuals from many professional backgrounds such as education, government, health care, and industry who contribute to microbiology and its many facets. Its members come from many different backgrounds and countries around the world. This article presents one of the individuals among the "Faces of ASM" who was among those who initiated this column and wrote one of the first "Faces" articles.

Marian C. Johnson-Thompson is currently Director, Education and Biomedical Research Development at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences



Johnson-Thompson

(NIEHS), NIH, at Research Triangle Park, N.C. She is also professor emerita of Biology and Environmental Sciences at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) and adjunct professor in the Department of Maternal and Child Health, School of Public Health at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. As a specialist in environmental health research policy, she is responsible for identifying environmental health research and training needs of underserved populations. Johnson-Thompson's interest in science in general and microbiology in particular, coupled with her passion for mentoring young minority scientists, started early in life and was based on lessons learned from her parents.

Johnson-Thompson, the oldest of six children, grew up in Miami, Fla., and Rivera Beach, Fla. She attended segregated schools with limited resources, including the lack of basic science equipment such as a microscope. Nonetheless, she was interested in science, and her father encouraged her interests by giving her books to read and science activities to do at home, as he wanted Marian to become a medical doctor. Johnson-Thompson received her B.S. and M.S. degrees in microbiology from Howard University (HU) in Washington D.C., and her Ph.D. degree in molecular virology in 1978 from Georgetown University. She then went to work at UDC, where she eventually became full professor. During this time she also did a sabbatical at the National Cancer Institute, and was adjunct professor at Georgetown University. Her research at UDC initially focused on SV40 DNA replication and conformation and subsequently on the molecular basis of multidrug resistance in breast cancer cells. Johnson-Thompson initiated strong mentoring relations with her UDC students, and today she is especially proud to see that many have developed into strong professionals in research and training, administration, and the health professional fields.

Aside from her illustrious career in academia and as an administrator, Johnson-Thompson also has a strong interest in training young scientists. At the NIEHS she addresses research and training needs of underserved populations and advises NIEHS senior staff on K-12 science education, outreach, and diversity activities. She

developed the Bridging Education, Science and Technology (BEST) Program with the local public schools, developed the extramural K-12 Environmental Health Sciences Education Program which provides curriculum materials and teacher development programs, and presently serves as liaison to North Carolina's minority-serving institutions (MSIs) and to other national MSIs, focusing on strengthening research and training capacity in these institutions. At the NIEHS, she was the primary architect of the Advanced Research Cooperation in Environmental Health (ARCH) program, designed to increase the participation of MSIs in environmental health sciences research and strengthen their capacity to train underrepresented minorities. Johnson-Thompson has also chaired the NIEHS Institutional Review Board, served as a member of the NIH Human Subjects Research Advisory Committee, and is a member of the Trans NIH Human Microbiome Working Group. During her tenure at the NIH she has received many outstanding performance awards, including several NIH Director's awards.

Johnson-Thompson became an ASM member in 1973 and has served as chair of the Committee on Undergraduate Education and currently chairs the Committee on Microbiological Issues Impacting Minorities (CMIM). In 2006, the CMIM started a monthly e-newsletter which contains scientific articles published by underrepresented minorities. This newsletter has served to increase the scientific community's awareness of outstanding underrepresented minorities. She has also served on several Boards, including the Board of Education and Training. For instance, while on the Precollege Education Committee, Johnson-Thompson was a member of the 1990 Life Sciences Education Planning Committee and spearheaded the Diversity Project which led to the development of educational posters featuring underrepresented and women microbiologists. These posters highlight the contributions of minorities and women in microbiology. She has also written several articles for *ASM News* (now *Microbe*), including "Ethnic Diversity in ASM: The Early History of African-American Microbiologist" (*ASM News*, February 1997, p. 77). Currently, Johnson-Thompson is a Lecturer

for the 2007–2008 ASM Branch Lectureships Program.

Johnson-Thompson has been successful in these activities because she is passionate about her volunteer activities and mentoring and strives to ensure that underrepresented members and women are able to fully participate in the activities of the ASM and contribute towards advances in the field of microbiology. In 2001, Myerhoff Scholars at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, named her Myerhoff Mentor of the Year. Her words of wisdom for young scientists are: "Always strive for excellence, have dedication to your work and be respectful to others, and your future will be brilliant."

In recognition of her vast contributions to the field of microbiology, in 1998, Johnson-Thompson was elected fellow of the American Academy of Microbiology, where she has chaired the Academy's Diversity Committee and served on the ad hoc Committee on Elections. In 2004, she was also elected to fellowship in the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In addition, she received the prestigious Alice C. Evans award for her many efforts in promoting the careers of women in microbiology.

Aside from her professional activities, Johnson-Thompson is also active in other organizations; she has served on the North Carolina Environmental Defense Fund Board of Trustees, the Durham Environmental Affairs Board, the Durham Public Education Network Board, the North Carolina School of Science and Math Foundation Board, and the Burroughs Wellcome Fund's Student Science Enrichment Program Advisory Board. Also, she is the very proud recipient of the 2003 Thurgood Marshall Alumni Award from the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCFF) for her activities as president of the local HU Alumni Association and her volunteer work with historically black colleges and universities. The TCMF has provided over \$68 million dollars in scholarship funds and support to historically black colleges and universities.

Johnson-Thompson resides in Durham, N.C., with her husband and two sons. She is very proud of her two sons and notes that she was able to mentor them using the experience she gleaned from working with her students. She also notes that her ac-