



Republic of Botswana

SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF HEALTH

HON. DORCAS MAKGATO

AT THE

OPENING OF MURIA WORKSHOP AND SYMPOSIUM



MINISTRY *of* HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

27/06/15

University of Botswana

- Chairperson, Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs Professor Otlogetswe Totolo.
- Acting ORD Director ,Prof Modisi
- Dean of Faculty of Medicine, Professor Vento,
- Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences, Prof Mashalla,
- Professor Lars Gustafsson, Co-principal Investigator and Chairperson of the Organising Committee
- Professor Amos Masele, Coordinator of the workshop
- Prof Brian Godman, Founder of MURIA group
- Professor Ilse (pronounced Elsie) Truter, founder of MURIA group
- Speakers from Sweden, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa and Swaziland, Presenters of abstracts and participants from Australia, Saudi Arabia, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia,
- Participants present and my fellow colleagues from Botswana
- Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is my pleasure to be here officiating this event which has been funded by a grant from the Swedish Research Council via the Karolinska Institute. I am informed that a team of visionary leaders from various countries met in Port Elizabeth and planned this workshop. We need to commend them and hope that they will keep the fire burning.
2. I note from the programme that the workshop is covering antibiotics use/misuse and resistance, antiretroviral medicines, mental health and anti-hypertensive medicines as well as generic medicines. This comes at the right time especially that recently when we were in Geneva, several issues were discussed including antibiotics use, misuse and development of resistance.

This topic of antibiotic resistance is close to my heart because I know it is preventable.

3. The negative impact of antibiotics misuse is well known and includes among other things increased costs from using expensive medicine for complicated infections and longer hospital stays as well as poor patients' outcomes.
4. Ladies and gentlemen so what is the way forward to curb antibiotic resistance. It goes without saying that prompt antimicrobial therapy for an infected patient can make the difference between cure and death or long-term disability. Unfortunately, the use and misuse of antimicrobials has driven the relentless expansion of resistant microbes leading to a loss of efficacy of these "miracle drugs". Because of their widespread availability and familiarity, generally low cost, and relative safety, antimicrobials are among the most misused of all medicines. Improving antimicrobial rational use decisions by health workers which conform with policy recommendations and standard treatment guidelines may be one solution to further reduce the emergence of antibiotic resistance.
5. This can be achieved by analysing current utilisation patterns and agreeing potential ways forward. Subsequently, monitoring utilisation against agreed strategies. The same strategy could also apply to antiviral drug resistance. There is also a need to discourage the indiscriminate use of antimicrobials in patients unlikely to derive any benefit. This can often be driven by patient demand. Consequently, my final suggestion on curbing drug resistance would be through mass media educational campaigns including the radio which has wide coverage to the majority of people in Africa, television and newspapers.

6. I am more than delighted that not only is the workshop discussing infectious diseases, but also medicines for non-communicable diseases and the safety of the medicines. Non communicable diseases are becoming a threat to developing countries, Botswana is no exception. They come at a cost and so it is important that the medicines are utilised appropriately.
7. I am informed that this workshop is going to equip the participants with the knowledge and skills not only to be able to conduct research including evaluation and auditing medicine utilisation but also to mentor young researchers. We can only act on what we know, so I expect each and every one who is here to take advantage of the expertise and form networks to facilitate collaboration.
8. Information sharing across countries, region and continents is vital in this dynamic world of patient care. Therefore all those who are here are going to be our champions and change agents to advise Ministries and indeed government on rational use of medicines including cost-effectiveness. Where policies need to be developed, they can only be informed by evidence medicine from the findings of research.
9. I am pleased to also hear that Botswana has already put a research team consisting of representatives from Ministry of Health, Medical Aid (BPOMAS) and University of Botswana and that the team will be receiving mentorship from Professor Gustafsson, Prof. Godman and Prof. Jaran Eriksen. I want to encourage the team to work hard and show the results. I also trust that there will be snowballing of this committee so that eventually we will have such committee in various districts and also be able to analyse data from both public and private sector.
10. I would like to sincerely thank all those who contributed financially to this workshop, the Karolinska Institute (KI), the International Union of Basic and Clinical Pharmacology (IUPHAR), BPOMAS and my Ministry.

I would like to thank the University of Botswana for hosting this workshop. We thank Prof Truter and the team at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth for assisting with the graphics and marketing of this workshop, the abstracts reviewers. Above all, this workshop would not have taken place if the organisers had not spent sleepless nights organising today's event.

11. I am also excited to see so many posters and I am sure we are going to learn a lot. On behalf of Botswana, and indeed on my own behalf, I want to say welcome to Botswana and welcome to this first MURIA-group workshop. Since it is first, I believe there will be many more to come.

12. I would like to encourage you all again to take advantage of the expertise we have and use that for networking. I would also like to encourage all of you to join the MURIA-Group because this will provide the platform for you to learn and collaborate. With that I would like to officially declare this workshop open.

Thank you.