

VISIT TO LAREB PHARMACOVIGILANCE CENTER, NETHERLANDS

Prof. Faith Okalebo and Dr. Christabel Khaemba of the Pharmacy and Poisons Board received an invitation by WHO to attend a workshop aimed at promoting incorporation of pharmacovigilance training in all undergraduate curricula of all health-related professionals. The workshop was held in Netherlands Pharmacovigilance Centre Lareb.

This institution is a WHO collaborating center on training on pharmacovigilance and patient reporting. Participants to the workshop were selected from all the 5 continents. Kenya and Moroccan participants were selected from Africa to provide the lead in this initiative. The facilitators were from the Universities of University of Groningen where Pharmacovigilance is an established part of the undergraduate curricula.

Participants were briefed on the WHO initiatives that led to the development of a curriculum. The workshop stressed on the importance of using non-traditional methods of training such as case studies in training health professionals on how to identify adverse drug reactions and how to report them to pharmacovigilance centers. One of the most interesting training methods employed is Student Run Pharmacovigilance Unit in the VU University Medical Clinic, Amsterdam where first to fifth year medical students are actively involved in submission and assessment of adverse drug event reports as part of their clinical rotations. Participants also got a chance to use a web-based site for e-learning on pharmacovigilance designed for health professionals. The website is still under development.

Participants got a chance tour the National Netherlands PV center. It was independently founded by groups of pharmacists who were concerned about medication related errors. It has since group and currently it is an independent foundation and is funded by the Dutch Medicines Evaluation Board (MEB) and the Ministry of Health. It receives between 20000 and 25000 reports on Adverse Drug Reactions every year.

All work and not no play makes Jack a very dull boy. To prevent being labelled as very dull people or nerds who use big sounding terms like “Pharmacovigilance” we indulged in touring the town of ‘s-Hertogenbosch (*please note that there is no spelling error here*) where the PV center is located. One needs training on how to pronounce the name of this town. Those who are slow to learn new languages, simply call it the Den Bosch which means “The Forest”. The most remarkably feature is the Roman Catholic Cathedral Church of St. John which is an

artistic and architectural master piece. Both the interiors and exteriors were amazing. It has to be seen to be appreciated.

No trip is complete without some shopping. Shopping in older parts Don Bosch is a slow leisurely and extremely gratifying experience. No cars, no traffic jams, no rush. Shops are quaint and the supply of designer wear is unmatched. The town square was filled with activity on Saturday and we got a chance to sample fried fish, chocolates, cheeses and mixed fried nuts.

It was an honor the School of Pharmacy, University of Nairobi is recognized as a center of excellence in Pharmacovigilance training in eastern Africa. To maintain this reputation, the department needs to redouble its efforts to improve the quality of training it provides.