



For Immediate Release

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NMA Launches Global Initiative

March 10, 2008....Washington, DC....The National Medical Association (NMA) kicked off its Global Health Initiative on March 8 in Washington to ease the critical shortage of health workers in select African countries. The Global Health Initiative, launched during NMA's First Annual Global Health Gala & Awards Dinner, aims to improve the scope and quality of healthcare delivery in African countries that have requested assistance.

“Through this new initiative, the brightest of the bright, and most talented NMA members will be dispatched to Sub-Saharan Africa to stem the ‘brain drain’ of health care workers and provide medical service, medicine, equipment and training for African physicians,” said Suzanne Malveaux, the CNN White House Correspondent who served as the event’s mistress of ceremonies.

The Africa Diaspora Health Initiative, the first of the two-pronged effort will send NMA members to Africa to provide medical service, medicines and equipment to train local African physicians. An initial 200 members will work for two to six months in Africa during the program’s first 18 months, with the ultimate goal of sending at least 500 members a year to work a minimum of one year.

“As the continent moves forward and international support for Africa gathers pace, the Diaspora is well positioned to make a practical contribution to accelerate growth and development,” said Mohammad Akhter, MD, executive director of the National Medical Association. “Africa asked for help from the National Medical Association and we are honored to respond to that call.”

Dr. Akhter said some African countries have only one physician for more than 20,000 citizens and despite available HIV/AIDS funding these countries are not able to expand their services to their citizens.

The initiative’s second part will help train physicians in Ghana as specialists in OB/GYN, pediatrics and family medicine by bringing them to the U.S. for their last three months of residency. The four historically black medical schools (Morehouse School of Medicine, Atlanta; Howard University School of Medicine, Washington, DC; Meharry Medical College, Nashville; and Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science, Los Angeles) have agreed to partner with the NMA. The NMA will also be contacting other medical centers in the U.S. to assist in the effort. The training program will help Ghana’s physicians and surgeons meet their training needs, and provide opportunities for U.S. physicians to learn about Africa, its people and diseases that are prevalent in Africa but rare in America.

NMA also presented several awards during the event attended by some 500 people. The Global Health Award, given to an organization or individual that supports the NMA's mission by advocating for quality health care and eliminating health disparities, was given to The Congressional Black Caucus.

“We applaud The Congressional Black Caucus for their efforts to end health disparities, and for their leadership and aggressive efforts to impact U.S policy in Africa,” said Nelson L. Adams, MD, a practicing Ob-gyn in Miami and president of the National Medical Association, who presented the award. “They have been at the forefront of initiating positive change in Africa. For example, they were able to galvanize an entire nation against Apartheid in South Africa and led the way for the President's AIDS initiative.”

NMA's Chair of the Board of Trustees, Dr. Nedra Joyner, presented the Louis Stokes Health Policy Award to Congressman Charles B. Rangel (D-NY).

“A founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus, Congressman Rangel has risen to the pinnacle of influence in Congress as a member of the House leadership,” said Dr. Joyner, Chief of Otolaryngology at Mt. Sinai Hospital and Medical Center in Chicago, who made the presentation. “His work and dedication to health, education and civil rights continues to inspire us. He's a true champion of health care for all people in America and abroad.”

NMA's First Annual Global Health Gala & Awards Dinner was co-chaired by the African Union Ambassador to the U.S., Madam Amina Salum Ali, Congresswoman Donna Christensen and the deans of the four historical black medical schools.

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Founded in 1895, the National Medical Association is the nation's oldest and largest medical association representing the interests of more than 30,000 African-American physicians and their patients. The NMA repeatedly advocates for policies that would assure equitable and quality health care for all people.