

Africa100

Madjid Samii MD, PhD.¹

¹International Neuroscience Institute, Hannover, Germany.

Correspondence

Madjid Samii, Neuroscience Institute, Hannover, Germany
Email: samii@ini-hannover.de

Funding information

None

Neurosurgery made a fascinating advancement in the last century. Its, historical development, however, was somewhat slower than that of other surgical specialties due to the complexity of the central nervous system. Initial attempts to treat brain disease surgically have been related to high morbidity and mortality. Only the better understanding of brain structure and function localization and the introduction of antisepsis, anesthesia, and hemostasis at the end of the 19th century led to increased interest and rapid advancement in the field. The other line of development of neurosurgery was to distribute the acquired knowledge and make this highly specialized care available to all patients around the world.

The global neurosurgery among all other surgical disciplines, was the foundation of neurosurgical organizations around the world, and their close cooperation, few countries founded the WFNS in 1955. The first president was Jefferson, and the first WFNS congress was held in 1957 in Brussels (congress president professor A. Walder). WFNS initiated a world congress every 4 years in order to gather neurosurgeons for scientific exchange.

Since the 70ies WFNS started organizing neurosurgical training courses in less developed countries. The WFNS Foundation was founded in 1998 with the goal to strengthen education (founder, professor Madjid Samii). The history of Africa100 goes back to the year 1997. In that year, I became President of WFNS, and I have asked all five 2nd Vice Presidents of different continents to prepare a report about the neurosurgical condition in each continent.

The report of the 2nd Vice President from Africa, Dr. Abdeslam El Khamlichi, was shocking. He reported that in entire Sub-Saharan countries in Africa with a population with more than 500 million inhabitants, there have only been 74 neurosurgeons working. Many countries did not even have one neurosurgeon. My personal goal was primarily how I can change this catastrophic condition in Africa. I was convinced it is important to educate young African medical doctors in neurosurgery in order to increase the number of neurosurgeons.

The previous education of African doctors in Europe or North America was not successful. After education, all African remain in their education countries. In order to avoid this brain-drain and achieve brain gain for Africa, I have decided to educate African young medical doctors first in North Africa under the condition that they can go back home after their education.

I have created a WFNS Foundation to support education. In one of our A/C meetings, I have announced the creation of the WFNS Foundation to support the education of neurosurgery in developing countries, particularly in Africa. My idea has been extremely supported by Dr. Martin Rodriguez

I am thankful to Dr. Abdeslam El Khamlichi, who started to negotiate with the Moroccan government and University for getting official permission and some support to accept the education of young neurosurgeons from other African countries. I was pleased to travel to Rabat and take part in the ceremony of the official inauguration of the reference center of WFNS, with my signature and the signature of the president of the University.

In a short time, we could observe that slowly, but surely the number of colleagues how have been supported by WFNS Foundation in Rabat. And as we have expected, all educated neurosurgeons turned back to their countries and started to establish neurosurgical departments.

The educated African neurosurgeons in Rabat or in other departments in North Africa when they go back home, they will face many difficulties starting neurosurgery. For neurosurgery, our instrumental sets and using microscopes was fundamental. Therefore, I have tried to build a neurosurgical instrumental set for the price of 3.000 USD together with help of Aesculap Company to donate for the start of neurosurgery in Africa. Additionally, I had asked ZEISS Company to organize an operative microscope limited to 10.000 USD, which we could donate as well for beginning neurosurgery. These prices have not been changed during the last 20 years. Therefore, I am thankful to Aesculap and ZEISS Company.

According to the fact the population in Africa was increasing, the few neurosurgeons we have trained by WFNS Foundation could not cover the need for neurosurgical activities.

In one of our A/C meetings in 2011, I was criticizing the members of A/C meeting about the activity for not increasing the number of educations for Africa for giving service to the people. The President of WFNS, Peter Black, looked at me and told me we need someone as an ambassador for Africa who can dedicate himself for this further development of education in Africa. At the same time, he told me, "why should you be our ambassador for Africa." It was a large discussion among all members of A/C meeting, and they have tried to convince me to accept this responsibility. In the position as ambassador for Africa, I had immediately had two major ideas. One was Africa100. I wanted to start with 100 candidates for neurosurgical residency to force and increase the number of neurosurgeons as soon as possible in Africa.

This project needed a complete support of senior African neurosurgeons. We already had some existing neurosurgical societies which were acting in different regions separately.

I was full of hope I could convince all my African colleagues and friends to come together and support my suggestion for general cooperation in all Africa.

In February 2012, I invited my African senior colleagues from different regions in Nairobi. It was one of the most important historical events of neurosurgery in Africa. I gave a long emotional speech to motivate my colleagues to create a strong and unique voice for Africa as continental African neurosurgical society for future projects. After some discussion, all my African colleagues have promised me to establish CAANS and support the project Africa 100.

A committee for Africa100 with outstanding and geographically located neurosurgeons has been founded as following: Professor Abdeslam El Khamlichi from Morocco, Professor Gilbert Dechambenoit from Ivory Coast, Professor Kazadi Kalangu from Zimbabwe, Dr. Raji Mahmud from Nigeria, Dr. Mahmood Qureshi from Kenya, and later, Professor Abderrahman Sidi Said from Algeria, Professor Graham Fieggen from Cape Town / South Africa. As secretary of this committee, Dr. Mahmood Qureshi has in agreement with all other members designed application guidelines for the candidates and announced the project across African countries.

The profound activities have started, and the reference centers for his education have been extended every year: Morocco (Fez, Casablanca, Marrakech), Algeria, Egypt (Cairo), Senegal (Dakar), Nairobi and, China. In the meantime, many candidates have been fully educated, and another number of candidates are still in education in different years. All the candidates are coming from following countries: Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea Conakry, Cameroon, Malawi, Niger, Benin, Tanzania, Mauritania, Chad, and Burundi.

It is important to emphasize that the priority of education was focused on those countries in Africa in which no neurosurgeon or only 1 to 3 neurosurgeons were working. As ambassador for Africa, I am thankful to the members of the Africa100 committee and all colleagues who have accepted to take care of this education program (figure 1).

I am also thankful to all sponsors in Germany and Taiwan, developed by the former President Yong-Kwang Tu, as well as some members of China INI Union, who have not only accepted the education of the candidates but also financed their education. I hope very much that in the near future we will reach our goal with 100 well-educated neurosurgeons in Africa under the umbrella of WFNS Africa100.



FIGURE 1. Africa100 project committee