



AFRICAN DECLARATION ON EPILEPSY

Under the aegis of the Global Campaign Against Epilepsy of the World Health Organization (WHO), International League against Epilepsy (ILAE) and International Bureau for Epilepsy (IBE), a meeting "Epilepsy : A Healthcare priority in Africa" was held in Dakar, Senegal, Africa on 5 and 6 May 2000. Professionals from Health and Social Sciences sectors and representatives from universities coming from every African Region unanimously agreed to the following Declaration:

CONSIDERING THAT :

- epilepsy is the most common serious chronic brain disorder, estimated to affect at least 50 million people in the world of which 10 million live in Africa alone, irrespective of race, religion, sex, age or socio-economic groups,
- epilepsy is not an infectious disease and seizures are not contagious,
- all people with epilepsy can be effectively and inexpensively treated,
- ¾ of people with epilepsy in Africa have no access to healthcare provisions and are not appropriately treated,
- general information about epilepsy, trained expertise, diagnostic facilities, antiepileptic drugs and surgery are not available to - or affordable by - the majority of people with epilepsy, for geographic, financial or cultural reasons,
- beliefs in supernatural causes and traditional treatment of epilepsy in Africa contribute to the under-utilization of the medical health services, to discrimination and social isolation,
- because of these factors, disability and mortality are greater in Africa than elsewhere,
- epilepsy has serious physical, psychological and social consequences for the afflicted and their families,
- the impact of epilepsy is most severe in children and adolescents,
- in Africa preventable causes of epilepsy are more frequent than elsewhere, including infectious diseases, head trauma, insufficient perinatal care and consanguinity,
- epilepsy does not receive adequate attention in existing national health plans,

WE PROCLAIM THE FOLLOWING :

Epilepsy is a healthcare priority in Africa requiring every government to develop a national plan to:

- ⇒ address the needs with respect to epilepsy in terms of access to trained personnel, modern diagnostic equipment, antiepileptic medication and surgical treatment, information communication, prevention and social integration,
- ⇒ educate and train health care and other relevant professionals about epilepsy,
- ⇒ educate those affected by epilepsy and the general public about epilepsy as a universal neurological, non-communicable and treatable condition,
- ⇒ eliminate discrimination in all spheres of life, particularly at school and the work place,
- ⇒ encourage incorporation of prevention and treatment of epilepsy in national plans for other relevant healthcare issues such as maternal and child health, mental health, infections, head trauma, neurovascular diseases and community based rehabilitation programs,
- ⇒ encourage the public and private sectors and NGO's to get involved in the local activities of the Global Campaign against Epilepsy,
- ⇒ promote interaction with traditional health systems,
- ⇒ encourage basic and applied research on epilepsy,
- ⇒ proclaim a National Epilepsy Day,
- ⇒ encourage regional and continental co-operation.

DAKAR, 6th May 2000

