



GHANAIAAN SOCIETY OF CARDIOLOGY

28th February, 2025

A COMMUNIQUE BY THE GHANAIAAN SOCIETY OF CARDIOLOGY AT ITS 7TH ANNUAL GENERAL AND SCIENTIFIC MEETING

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The Ghanaian Society of Cardiology (GSC) had its 7th Annual General and Scientific Meeting under the theme, **Management of Cardiac Emergencies: The Ghanaian Context**. The meeting was at the Modern City Hotel in Tamale from the 27th to the 28th of February 2025. The Northern Regional Director of Health Services, Dr Abdulai Abukari, and several distinguished local and international guests graced the conference.

Cardiovascular deaths continue to top the list of mortality in Ghana, Africa and the world at large. A greater contributor to this tally is deaths arising because of acute cardiac situations. Cardiac emergencies are serious medical situations that occur due to a sudden disruption in the normal functioning of the heart. These emergencies can range from acute coronary syndrome commonly referred to as heart attack to sudden cardiac arrest, and they require immediate medical attention to prevent further complications. The ability to **identify** the symptoms of a cardiac emergency and the timely arrival at a well-equipped centre with trained personnel is crucial for timely intervention and a chance at survival. By being aware of the signs and having knowledge of first aid techniques, one can also save a person's life out of the hospital. It requires both out-of-hospital and in-hospital preparedness to prevent untoward complications or eventually the loss of such lives.

Presentations from seasoned and renowned cardiologists highlighted the need to step up the national preparedness in handling cardiac emergencies and urged the setting up of standard cardiac emergency systems whilst consolidating the utility of available ones such as the national ambulance and air-force evacuations in the instance of cardiac emergencies. The deliberations also highlighted the inequality in the distribution of critical care facilities such as catheterisation labs utilised in a time-bound fashion in carrying out lifesaving procedures in cardiac emergencies

Other highlights included the need to educate the populace on identifying symptoms and early warning signs of cardiac disorders which could potentially turn into emergencies such as sudden onset of chest pain, unilateral leg swelling, sudden onset of palpitations and dizziness and also to adopt a heart-healthy lifestyle, including strategies such as adopting a healthy diet (with adequate intake of fruits and vegetables, a low-fat diet, low sugar, and low salt diet), increasing physical activity levels, quitting smoking, reducing alcohol intake, and maintaining a healthy weight.

The crucial need for good control of hypertension, diabetes, and high blood cholesterol, as well as the maintenance of adequate body weight to prevent the occurrence of heart attack, stroke, aortic dissection and fetal arrhythmias were also highlighted.

In the Paediatric population, cardiac emergencies, even though relatively rare compared to adults, lead to significant morbidity and mortality, and hence early recognition and prompt initiation of appropriate therapy is very essential.

The Ghanaian Society of Cardiology, in line with its mandate to promote good cardiovascular health seeks to prevent all deaths in all cardiac emergencies for all Ghanaians, and therefore recommends the following measures to prevent and reduce the occurrence of catastrophic consequences during cardiac emergencies

1. All Ghanaians should be educated on the identification of early warning symptoms and signs to seek prompt attention in case of any cardiac emergency. This most singular objective could be achieved through public education on all social media platforms, and as 5-minute educational promotion messages during national gatherings such as anniversary celebrations, national addresses by the presidency and important state functions organised at either national, regional or district levels
2. All Ghanaians should be educated on the important emergency numbers to call in the event of a cardiac emergency. This is achievable by engaging the telecommunication companies to send occasional free text to their users or subscribers as alerts, and through announcements on television and radios
3. The GSC highly recommends that all organizations, both governmental and non-governmental (including private institutions, banks, churches and mosques), take the necessary steps to install portable automated external defibrillators on-site to assist in treating sudden cardiac arrest.
4. As a matter of urgency, the government should address the palpable inequalities in the distribution of catheterisation laboratories across the country. The GSC believes that Ghanaian lives are worth saving and therefore the association calls on government and all stakeholders in health delivery for the urgent setting up of cardiac catheterization laboratories in the 4 teaching hospitals (KATH, TTH, HTH, Cape Coast Teaching Hospital) which has the requisite personnel /interventionist to carry out primary percutaneous interventions in the event of a heart attack
5. The association also recommends that all regional hospitals and tertiary facilities without catheterisation facilities should ensure the training of a team of critical care personnel in thrombolysis, and ensure availability of thrombolytic agents at the centre, in the event of ST- elevation myocardial infarctions and life-threatening pulmonary embolism.
6. The GSC also consider it a matter of importance for the training of at least one cardiologist per region to serve as the lifeline in the event of any cardiac emergency. This can be achieved through the commitment of all regional health directors to identify at least a specialist physician with interest in cardiology for sponsorship for a fellowship in cardiology with the Ghana Postgraduate College of Physicians.
7. All Ghanaians should be encouraged to adopt a heart-healthy lifestyle through regular check-ups to detect the early onset of cardiovascular disease risk factors such as high blood pressure, high blood sugar, and high cholesterol at least annually.
8. Individuals with established cardiovascular disease risk factors like hypertension and diabetes, and/or cardiovascular diseases like stroke and previous heart attacks should comply with their routine clinic attendance and treatment plans as prescribed by their health caregivers
9. The GSC also recommends that the Ghana medical association, GMA and Ghana registered nurses association, GRNA should ensure regular role out of continuous professional educational events in cardiac emergencies (CPD) for their members to improve and keep their management skill and knowledge competencies at acceptable international standards
10. The Technical Working Group for Cardiovascular Disease care in Ghana, a subcommittee of the National Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) Steering Committee, should be empowered to improve cardiovascular disease care in Ghana.
11. The government should strongly increase its support to GSC in executing its mandate on cardiovascular disease advocacy and training across the country.

12. The initiation of a countrywide protocol for screening for critical congenital heart diseases using pulse oximeter via the well-known protocols for such lesions.

13. The Ghanaian Society of Cardiology craves the indulgence of all key stakeholders, healthcare professionals, government and policymakers, and all Ghanaians to support these key recommendations to promote cardiovascular health for all Ghanaians.

Dr. Collins Kokuro
President, GSC

Dr. Lambert Tetteh Appiah
General Secretary, GSC

Cc:

1. The Presidential Special Advisor on Health, Dr Anthony Nsiah Asare
2. The Chairman of Parliamentary Select Committee on Health
3. Ministry of Health, Ghana
4. The Ghana Health Service
5. The Program Manager, NCD
6. Ghana NCD Alliance
7. DEMSOG
8. Neurological Society of Ghana
9. Ghana Medical Association
10. Pharmaceutical Society of Ghana
11. All Media Houses