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THE MUHAS SICKLE CELL PROGRAMME AWARDED THE DR LEE JONG-WOOK MEMORIAL PRIZE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH 2020

The World Health Organization awarded the Dr LEE Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health 2020 to the Sickle Cell Disease Consortium (Sickle CHARTA) which is led by the Sickle Cell Programme within the Department of Haematology and Blood Transfusion at Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS).

The decision was made at the 146th session of the Executive Board of the World Health Organization. The Sickle Cell Disease Consortium shares the 2020 award with Dr João Aprigio Guerra de Almeida (Brazil). The prize for each laureate is a plaque and US\$50,000.

The Dr LEE Jong-wook Memorial Prize was established in 2008 and is awarded to a person or persons, an institution or institutions, who have made an outstanding contribution to public health. The prize aims to reward work that has extended far beyond the call of normal duties. The Sickle Cell Disease Consortium was nominated by the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children (MoHCDGEC) in recognition of the contribution the consortium has made to the understanding and treatment of sickle cell disease (SCD) which is a disease of public health importance in Tanzania.

The prize citation acknowledges that the “Sickle Cell Disease Consortium has demonstrated high capacity in translating research into innovative health policies and clinical practices, and has been an enabling force for developing health care in resource-limited settings. This consortium has also illustrated that effective global partnerships can build a critical mass of individuals and lead to significant advances in health and biomedical science in the area of public and family health.” The citation also acknowledged the close working relationship between the Sickle Cell Disease Programme and patient and advocacy groups including the Sickle Cell Disease Patients Community (led by Arafa Salim), Sickle Cell Foundation of Tanzania (led by Grace Rubambey), Sickle Cell Youth Foundation (led by Yusuph Gesase) and the Tanzania Sickle Cell Disease Alliance (led by Dr Deo Soka)

Professor Julie Makani, a Principal Investigator in the Sickle Cell Disease Programme, is the formal awardee of the prize on behalf of the Consortium. Professor Makani thanked the MoHCDGEC for the nomination and said that the prize reflected the hard work of many healthcare workers, researchers, advocacy groups, patients and support staff who are working to reduce the burden of SCD in Tanzania. The prize will contribute to the ongoing work of the consortium (Sickle CHARTA) which is an innovative multidisciplinary approach to improving health outcomes that involves health research, training and advocacy.

The prize funds will contribute on health in supporting the Sickle Cell helpline, patient support and support to hospital facilities that manage SCD patients; on research in academic awards for research projects into SCD; on training in improving skills in SCD care and research, and on advocacy in support to patient groups and community organisations.

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