



Reg. Charity No: 1006159

www.teamPATA.org

Volume 3.

# L'Équipe PATA

The Daily Journal of the  
Paediatric AIDS Treatment for Africa (PATA) Forum

27<sup>TH</sup> November–1<sup>ST</sup> December 2007 Manzini, Swaziland



The PATA 2007 Forum is proudly supported by



## And we're off with a bang!

“Our patients are poor, but not stupid.” That was one of the most important lessons Joia Mukherjee learnt while working in HIV/AIDS affected communities in Haiti.

Since then, as Medical Director for Partners in Health in Uganda, she has, in her uniquely fiery way, imparted this and other knowledge gained from the field to first world audiences and developing countries alike.

The keynote speaker on the opening night of the 2007 PATA Forum, Mukherjee challenged her large audience throughout.

“What you need is an approach that’s comprehensive, that says this woman’s life counts,” she said, emphasising that the fight against HIV/AIDS should never be an isolated one, but an integrated one.

Citing common misconceptions as to how people in developing countries

contract the disease, she illustrated how poverty is the biggest single factor, so often overlooked and not integrated with the treatment of AIDS patients.

She told of how “structural violence” in poor communities comes to the surface when women, alone with their children while their husbands work in distant mines or cities, offer sex in exchange for food and security, hence making the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS bigger.

“We are the advocates – nobody else is going to address these issues,” she reminded the assembled delegates. “If we don’t advocate for somehow getting these children tested, it’s not going to happen.”

A community based approach to diagnosis, treatment and adherence is essential, she said. The patient’s home environment, psychosocial and physical needs must also be taken into account.



Joia Mukherjee in full flight.



### PATA Forum is an “historic event” says minister

The Swazi Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Mr Njabulo Mabuza, spoke at the opening of the PATA Forum 2007 on Tuesday evening.

“You will know better than I how our children are suffering,” Mabuza (photo left) told the delegates who had arrived from all over Africa earlier the same day. “You will know as well as I do, how heavy the burden is for the people in our communities.”

He listed some sobering statistics: children made up 13 per cent of new global HIV/AIDS infections during

2005; that they accounted for 14 per cent of HIV/AIDS deaths annually and that they represented 6 per cent of the persons living with HIV to day. Ninety per cent of those children with HIV live in Africa.

The problem is that only 4% of all patients currently receiving treatment are children. “Often, health care in Africa arrives too late,” Mabuza said. He gave his blessing to the PATA Forum, calling it an “historic event”.

“They (PATA) are doing something valuable, admirable and rare,” he said.

## Better late than never...

With 41 teams from 18 African countries attending the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual PATA gathering here in Swaziland, the logistics involved were immense – for some more so than others!

Some of the teams had nightmarish travelling experiences, while others reported a smooth journey. Most complained about the unexpected cold and rain, while the scenic views pleasantly surprised some participants.

The Tanzanian teams only arrived after 10pm, after first having to travel more than 1000 km to Dar es Salaam to catch a flight. Delegates from Burkina Faso had travelled for four days consecutively to get here, and were still smiling at the end of it!

A number of delegates were interviewed regarding their expectations of the conference. Many were excited to be here and eager to learn from other teams' experiences, as well as to make friends and network.



The team from Kadira, Tanzania, arrive to huge cheers.

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## Scenes from opening night of PATA Forum 2007



Delegates registered in the foyer before the opening gala dinner.



Jennifer Altschuler, Minister Njabulo Mabuza and Blaise Bucibyaruta in conversation.



The traditional Swazi band Sigubhu Sebaloz (which refers to the calabash from which a traditional healer can summon the ancestors) entertained delegates. Later in the evening, after David Altschuler's speech, Joia Mukherjee and ?? heeded his call and did an impromptu 'pata-pata' dance.

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