

# Healthy Ageing

## Ageing with a Smile Initiative



### GAMBIA EXPERIENCE DONATES TO ASI

In commemoration of its 25 year anniversary in the provision of services to holiday makers in this country, The Gambia Experience has donated £25,000 to organisations and charities in the country. Ageing with a Smile Initiative (ASI) is one of the organisations that has benefited from this donation.



ASI has received £800 from Gambia Experience and the funds will be used to purchase essential medications needed to conduct 10 free community-based screening and consultation programmes from March to December 2013. The project is a continuation of ASI's drive to promote and protect the health and welfare of older persons in The Gambia. The project aims to promote and protect the health of older persons by providing routine screening and consultations with a particular focus on diabetes, hypertension and eye problems. The project also creates awareness for family members on the importance of good nutrition and regular exercise to prevent and manage non-communicable diseases. Up to 2000 older persons are expected to benefit directly from this support. The screening sessions support older persons, particularly those who are disadvantaged to detect and effectively manage their health problems. Follow up services are facilitated by ASI and patients that need further care and management are referred to specialists. Those with chronic conditions are supported by ASI through routine home based care.

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### World Health Day, 2013: Control your blood pressure

In commemoration of World Health Day this year, WHO published "The *Global brief on hypertension: silent killer, global public health crisis*". The document describes why, in the early 21st century, hypertension is a global public health issue. It shows how hypertension contributes to the burden of heart disease, stroke and kidney failure and premature death and disability. The document also explains how hypertension is both preventable and treatable and how governments, health workers, civil society, the private sector, families and individuals can join forces to reduce hypertension and its impact. For more on hypertension, refer to Page 3.

**"High blood pressure must be taken seriously. It is a strong and reliable warning signal that health is at risk and that something needs to be done"**

Dr Margaret Chan  
Director-General of the World



## THE SUKUTA HEALTH SCREENING



One of the volunteers from Sheikh Zayed Regional Eye Care Centre

On March 30, 2013 ASI with support from medical volunteers from Francis Small Teaching Hospital, Sheikh Zayed Regional Eye Care Centre and Pakala Clinic conducted a screening for older persons in Sukuta. The programme was hosted by the staff of Sukuta Health Centre who sensitized the community of the availability of free services.

A total of 80 older persons (48 females and 32 males) visited the clinic and were reviewed by 2 medical doctors and 2 experienced nurses. Most of the patients seen were hypertensive. As usual, there was a pre-screening talk during which Saikou Fatajo, a member of ASI introduced the aim and objectives of ASI to the elderly and also explained the principle of the screening. This was followed by a health talk by Dr Bully Camara focusing on the prevention and management of non-communicable diseases. All the patients had their vital sign checked by nurses from Pakala Clinic, Sukuta Health Centre and student volunteers from the School of Nursing. The volunteers from the Regional Ophthalmic Training Programme– SZRECC screened 43 patients for visual acuity and only 7 of them had normal vision. Some of the patients received treatment at the screening and others were referred to SZRECC for detailed evaluation and management.

Some of the older patients at the Sukuta screening



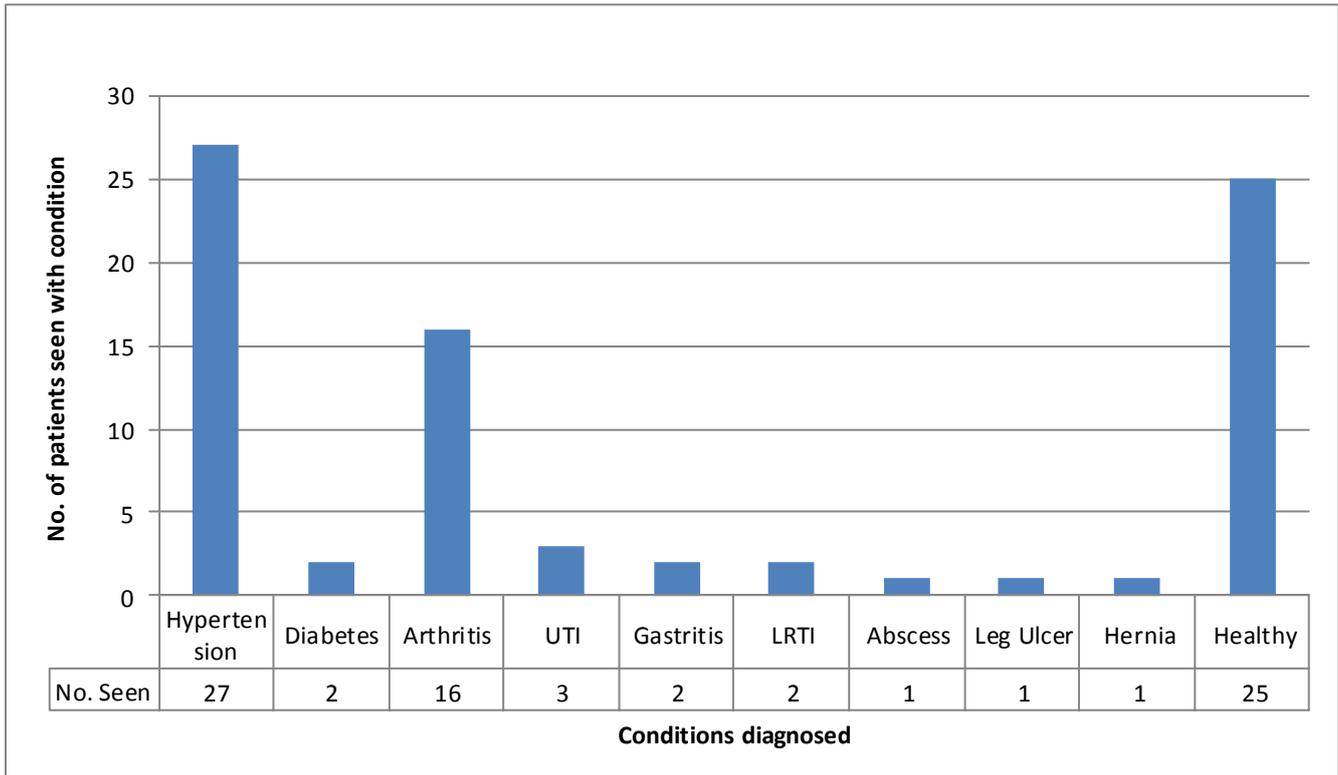
An ASI member interviewing one of the patients at the screening

### What the elders say about the services provides by ASI

Exit interviews conducted with some of the older persons who came to the screening indicated that they were very impressed with the services provided by the team.. They also expressed satisfaction with the care that they received from the volunteers and the way the screening and consultations were organized. The interviewees appealed for the medical team to visit their community on a regular basis.

Commenting on the benefits of the screening, one older woman noted that the screening gave her the opportunity to meet people that she did not see for a long time.

**CLINICAL DIAGNOSIS OF PATIENTS SEEN AT THE SUKUTA SCREENING**



**About 34 % of the patients seen were diagnosed as hypertensive**



**Out of the 43 patients screened for visual acuity, 13 ( 30%) were diagnosed with cataract**

# HYPERTENSION: THE PROBLEM AND THE SOLUTION

## Key messages

### The problem

High blood pressure (also known as raised blood pressure or hypertension) can lead to heart attack, stroke and other serious health problems. It affects more than one in three adults and leads to more than nine million deaths worldwide every year. High blood pressure can also cause kidney failure, blindness, rupture of blood vessels and brain impairment.

Many people do not know that they have high blood pressure because it does not always cause symptoms. Even though it is easily diagnosed and treated, many people do not have access to basic health services, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

### The solution

High blood pressure is both preventable and treatable.

Controlling high blood pressure, together with other risk factors, is the main way to prevent heart attack and stroke.

The risk of developing high blood pressure can be minimized by: cutting down on salt; eating a balanced diet; avoiding harmful use of alcohol; getting regular exercise; and avoiding tobacco use.

For many people, lifestyle changes are sufficient to control blood pressure. For others, medication is required. Inexpensive medication exists, which is effective when taken as prescribed.

It is essential that detection and control of high blood pressure (measurement, health advice and treatment), are coupled with simultaneous reduction of other risk factors that cause heart attacks and strokes, such as diabetes and tobacco use. They should be core elements of primary health care in all countries, and integral to efforts to reduce the growing burden of non-communicable diseases.

Civil society has an important role to play in helping to address high blood pressure.

Industry can contribute to the solution, for example, by reducing salt in processed food and making essential diagnostics and medicines more affordable.

Source: [http://www.who.int/campaigns/world-health-day/2013/campaign\\_essentials/en/index4.html](http://www.who.int/campaigns/world-health-day/2013/campaign_essentials/en/index4.html)

To access the Global Brief on Hypertension published by WHO, visit the link below:

[http://www.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/79059/1/WHO\\_DCO\\_WHD\\_2013.2\\_eng.pdf](http://www.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/79059/1/WHO_DCO_WHD_2013.2_eng.pdf)

## Facts and figures

- More than one in three adults worldwide has high blood pressure, with the proportion going up to one in two for people aged 50 and above.

- The number of people with hypertension rose from 600 million in 1980 to 1 billion in 2008.

- Complications of high blood pressure account for more than 9 million deaths worldwide every year. This includes 51% of deaths due to strokes and 45% of deaths due to coronary heart disease.

- Across the WHO regions, the prevalence of raised blood pressure was highest in Africa, where it was 46% for both sexes combined. Both men and women have high rates of raised blood pressure in the Africa region, with prevalence rates over 40%. Globally, overall prevalence of high blood pressure in adults aged 25 and older was around 40% in 2008.

**Early detection is key: all adults should know their blood pressure.**

## **Ageing with a Smile Initiative**

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**Supporting older persons to live healthier and more dignified lives**



For a regular updates on the work of ASI, visit our Facebook page:

[www.facebook.com/ASIGambia](http://www.facebook.com/ASIGambia)

ASI is a community-based organisation which was launched in The Gambia in January 2010. It runs a health promotion project that aims to improve the health of older persons in The Gambia. We provide free community based screening and consultations for older persons in partnership with local communities, staff of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and private clinics in the country.

### **ASI's work is supported by our members and volunteers who are motivated by the following:**

- \* The passion to make a positive impact in the lives of older persons
- \* The opportunity to interact with and learn from older persons
- \* The joy in meeting people of similar interests
- \* The opportunity for career development through the acquisition of relevant skills and experience.

If you share the same motivations, you are invited to join us.



### **We are grateful to the following organisations for their valuable support to ASI:**

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare

Gambia Experience , United Kingdom

Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital, Banjul

Sheikh Zayed Regional Eye Care Centre, Kanifing

Pakala Clinic, Banjul

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