



PRESS RELEASE

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Strengthening Palliative Care in Zambia through Improved Access to Evidence-based Information Resources

PEPFAR-supported Palliative Care Association of Zambia Opens New Learning Resource Center at its Offices in Lusaka

LUSAKA, ZAMBIA, July 21, 2011 — The American International Health Alliance (AIHA) celebrated today the opening of a Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the Palliative Care Association of Zambia (PCAZ). Since 2005, PCAZ has participated in an HIV/AIDS Twinning Center partnership with the African Palliative Care Association (APCA), working to develop institutional and human resource capacity at PCAZ and position the organization as Zambia's leading advocate for national palliative care policies and standards.

“Staff at most hospices have been trained to effectively manage pain in patients with life-limiting illnesses, but providing this care remains a challenge for most other health professionals. Even for home-based care providers, there comes a point when they need to offer palliative care,” says PCAZ National Coordinator Njekwa Lumbwe. “Evidence-based information is the key to building the knowledge base and skills that will give healthcare providers the confidence they need to provide quality palliative care to people who require these services and support,” she continues, explaining that the new LRC provides access to a wealth of up-to-date, evidence-based resources that will help inform and guide clinical practices and improve patient care.

This LRC supports the work of the partnership, as well as PCAZ's ongoing efforts to train health and allied caregivers, by improving access to evidence-based knowledge resources available online, on CD-ROM, or in hard copy. It also helps reinforce a more holistic approach to caring for patients with life-limiting illnesses by allowing users to better assess existing practices, which can have a significant impact of quality of care and rational use of scarce resources.

A delegation from Zambia's Ministry of Health — including Permanent Secretary Dr. Peter Mwaba, Director of Clinical Services Mr. Gardner Siakantu, Home-based Care Specialist Ms. Veronica Muntaga, and Chief Physiotherapist Mr. Cleto Mweemba — attended the opening ceremony, which took place at PCAZ headquarters in Lusaka.

Dr. Susan Brems, US Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission Director in Zambia, officially dedicated the LRC to the country of Zambia on behalf of the American people. Other honored guests included Dr. Suba Lungu, PCAZ Board Chair; Dr. Mwaba Bota, Youth and OVC

Advisor at USAID/Zambia; Dr. Ben Chirwa, Executive Director of the National AIDS Council; Dr. Kenneth Lishimpi, Acting Executive Director at the Cancer Diseases Centre; Dr. Kenneth Kapembwa, a physician and evidence-based medicine specialist with Livingstone General Hospital; and the country directors for organizations working in the field of palliative care, including Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, World Vision, and Catholic Relief Services.

The PCAZ / APCA partnership is supported by the American people with funding from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and USAID/Zambia through a cooperative agreement with the US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

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