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I am Meriem Bakkar, gastroenterologist and hepatologist and a proud member of the World Gastroenterology Organisation's (WGO) Training Center in Rabat. I am absolutely honoured to be given the opportunity to share some perspective on the WGO Rabat Training Center (RTC).

Ten years ago, I attended the RTC as a student. It was a fundamental part of my training and education in Gastroenterology. Thanks to an unfailing support of my professors, the training I received enabled me to continue to build my learning and trace my path towards my dream of becoming a gastroenterologist and a hepatologist.

Today, thanks to my devoted teacher Pr Naima Amrani's trust, I have the privilege to join WGO's mission aiming to tackle the disparities in education worldwide and training the next gastroenterologists generation in Africa.

Pr M.Classen and Pr N.Amrani's goal to optimize digestive health care worldwide: creation of Rabat Training Center

The demand for the prevention and treatment of digestive disorders worldwide was such that the WGO started to envisage a global approach that contributes to level the playing field for developing countries. Pr Meinhard Classen played an important role enhancing and boosting digestive healthcare in those countries. With these objectives and with the agreement of the Moroccan Ministry of Higher Education and the WGO, the Rabat Training Center was created in 2001. It is located at Mohammed V University, Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacology. It is aimed at French speaking physicians, mostly from Africa.

RTC's main goal is to promote high standards training in gastroenterology, hepatology and endoscopy while keeping pace with the most recent learning tools. French is the adopted teaching language to facilitate knowledge sharing and access to information, as some of the physicians may not be fully familiar with English terminology. RTC also aims to create a link between the African doctors and the international gastroenterology's community. Finally, it is also a training platform for trainers. These goals are reached with the collaboration and support of several scientific societies¹.

Multiple modern and didactic training tools are available in our center: a conference room with a simultaneous translation booth, devices for endoscopy trainings with computerized simulators, mannequins, and animal models (EASIE models), ultrasound units, and a multimedia library.

RTC's Main Activities

The center offers 2 kinds of trainings:

1-Short term program: The annual intensive educational course

The center provides a short-term training program by organizing a 15 day annual course. It is an educational event that gathers on average 70 young physicians and international experts. The course includes a theoretical part with interactive courses and clinical cases led by carefully selected speakers. Participants thus acquire robust knowledge and get updates on digestive pathology as well as the recent guidelines.

Practical workshops in endoscopy and abdominal ultrasound for all the attendees complete the training program. Hands on sessions are organized for the participants who are split into small groups according to their level and experiences. Various stations are available, from the learning of technical aspects in diagnostic endoscopy with the help of simulators and mannequin devices to advanced therapeutic procedures on animal models. All the stations are supervised by an expert.

At the end of this intensive course a certificate of attendance are delivered to the participants. An evaluation takes place and gives access to the best candidates for another participation. The event also offers great opportunities for networking and exchanging views and contacts between the program attendees and the experts.

The RTC Annual Course through some Trainees' Testimony



Dr. Félicien Shikama, Rwanda

"I was very impressed by the content of the course as it includes both theoretical and practical sessions with great experts from different countries. Many interesting topics in gastroenterology and hepatology are discussed. I was very interested in practical sessions and it was my first time ever to be trained on animal

¹ Société Nationale Française de Gastroentérologie (SNFGE)- The Belgian Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (BSGIE)- Société Marocaine des Maladies de l'Appareil Digestif (SMMAD)- Société Marocaine d'Endoscopie Digestive (SMED) and many others....

models. Since then I got more interest in endoscopy practice. I have acquired motivation to keep improving my practical skills at home and now, I am confident to do upper gastrointestinal endoscopies without supervision. To attend this course enabled me to choose gastroenterology and hepatology as my future career in medicine and has opened my mind to further trainings”

Dr. Asma Labidi, Winner of the Evaluation 2017, Tunisia

“The areas of training were various and there was a great balance between theory and practice: conferences on various fields of hepatology, GI oncology, and motility disorders, hands-on endoscopy workshops. It was a great opportunity for me to make contacts with international experts as well as colleagues from many African countries. Fortunately, I had the chance to be there once again and it was a great honor for me to make a case presentation to my colleagues there. It was a very nice experience”



Dr. Jean Christophe Saurin - Trainer : Lyon, France

“I’m happy to have participated the past 10 years to this very important educational event held in Rabat in January. Doctors from all Africa follow 2 weeks course covering all different parts of our very large specialty. They have the opportunity to hear from international experts in each field, to see experts doing, to handle different devices, and test their skills under supervision on animal models. This event does a fantastic job aiming at improving medical care in Africa. This happens under the warm supervision of Pr Naima Amrani and her wonderful team.”

Dr. Danny DeLooze - Trainer : Gent, Belgium

“Since 2011 I have been participating as lecturer/expert at the yearly WGO course in Rabat, Morocco. From the first time onwards, I was impressed by the professional framework that is set up to teach gastro-entero-hepatology to young African gastroenterologists. Every year, I am surprised by the knowledge the students have: I always give talks in an interactive way with lots of questions for the audience and I am surprised by the answers I get from them. They are very well prepared and exhibit a high level of theoretical background. The African students are eager to get practical information, not only during the lectures but also during the breaks they come to the experts with lots of questions for their daily practice. This WGO center plays a crucial role in the formation and ongoing education of the African gastroenterologists.”





Dr. Alan Barkun - Trainer : Montréal, Canada

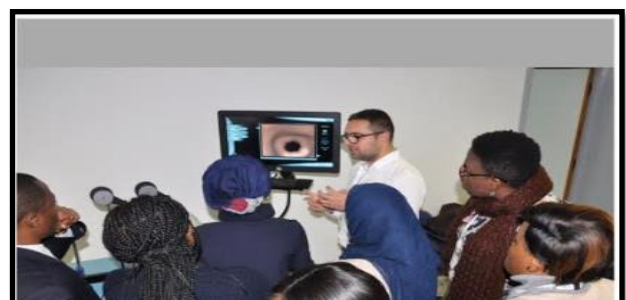
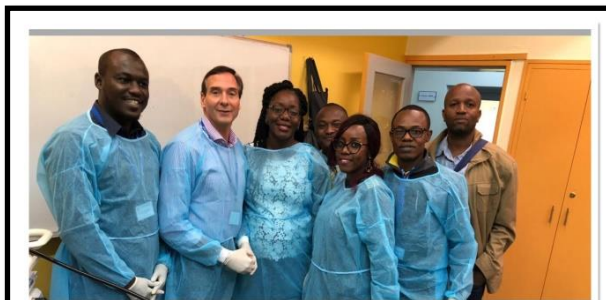
“It is truly a life-changing event for both participants and Faculty. Participants are highly motivated, multi-country, multicultural group of colleagues who bring with them an openness of mind and genuine thirst for learning that in my experience is both unusual and extremely gratifying for all both speakers and attendees. The entire group becomes essentially a family whose members learn continuously together and from each other, in a multitude of learning sessions that include didactic, small group, and hands-on opportunities.”

Dr. Nada Lahmidani- Trainer : Fès, Morocco

“I was delighted to take this course a few years ago as an apprentice and then come back later as an expert. I warmly congratulate this dynamic, professional, and very reactive team. It is a unique experience to meet eminent experts from all over the world. An opportunity to be seized by all gastroenterologists. Great job. Great team!”



Pictures from the 2020 WGO RTC Course





2- Long term program: Training fellowships

In its effort to fulfill the global educational mandate, the RTC offers a great opportunity to African physicians to add to their curriculum a cutting edge long term program allowing up to 5 years fellowships. They get academic and practical training and are exposed to the clinical and technical aspects of hepatology, gastroenterology and endoscopy. Both practical training with patients and theoretical courses at the University Hospital Ibn Sina in Rabat occur under the supervision of confirmed specialists. The Moroccan specialty degree is delivered at the end of this training program.

Medium-term programs are also implemented for gastroenterologists who want to learn or update their skills in all our specialty branches especially in diagnostic and therapeutic endoscopy. They can benefit from the didactic means of the center and the technical platform at the hospital. WGO RTC is proud of having trained several specialists in Africa who now practice successfully gastroenterology in their countries.

Feedback from gastroenterologists on how RTC succeeded in meeting their needs in terms of education and formation



Dr. Saké Alassan Khadidjatou, Benin

“After obtaining my state doctorate in general medicine in Benin, I benefited from a long term training in gastroenterology in Rabat. It took place at the RTC and at the University Hospital in the Gastroenterology and hepatology department led by Professor Naima Amrani. The WGO center in Rabat helped train the first female gastroenterologist in Benin. After getting my degree, I returned to my home country where I am taking care of patients suffering from digestive diseases. I hope that this training of young doctors from subsaharan Africa will continue, it is in the best interest for its population.”

Dr. Ghislaine Ngatcha, Cameroun

“I spent 4 years of training in gastroenterology, hepatology and digestive endoscopy at the WGO center in Rabat. It allowed me to perform upper and lower endoscopies, as well as therapeutic endoscopic procedures (ligation of esophageal varices, foreign bodies removal, polypectomy, dilation of stenosis...). Currently in Cameroun, I practice gastroenterology and hepatology thanks to the WGO center in Rabat that taught me everything.”



Dr Enam Sobkeng Goufack, Château Thierry, France

“Rabat training center is particularly useful for the development of gastroenterology in Africa. It has truly been a driving force and inspiration in my professional development. I first attended this center as a trainee (short and long term programs) and now I am regularly invited as a French WGO expert of Cameroonian origins. It offers a quality training in a pleasant environment at the service of young

gastroenterologists under the leadership of the Director of the Center, Professor Naima Amrani. It is a model for transferring skills and it integrates specific needs of each trainee.”

Collaboration with Scientific Societies

The RTC also plays a major role in promoting gastroenterology at a national level. Its team is always pleased to participate or organize hands on sessions and courses either at national congresses or with a small group of residents in gastroenterology and practicing specialists in order to offer them a continuing medical education especially in endoscopy. (For more additional information, you can visit WGO RTC website: <http://wgo-rtc.um5s.ac.ma>).

A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way (John C. Maxwell)



Pr. Naima Amrani. WGO RTC Director

All of these achievements couldn't be realized without Professor Naima Amrani's hardwork, generosity, vision, and respect of the global educational mandate. Through her leadership and dedication, our team is able to deliver on WGO's objectives in an inclusive and dynamic environment. RTC is recognized in the gastroenterology community as a successful organism that allows physicians from different background to meet, exchange and grow. All the actions of our team are geared towards sharing an updated and rigorous scientific knowledge. RTC will celebrate its 20th birthday in 2021 and will be happy to welcome the candidates for the 20th edition of its annual course.

WGO RTC's Team

