

# African Interest Group



January 2024

African interest group, ATS  
Co-Chairs:  
Daniel Obaseki MD ATSF  
Richard van Zyl-Smit MD ATSF

Co-Chairs elected:  
Christian Bime MD  
Chizalu Ndukwu MD



Interested in respiratory, critical care, and sleep medicine in Africa? Sign up to receive the African Interest Group (AIG) Newsletter, a twice-yearly publication from the ATS that aims to keep you up-to-date and informed on the group's activities. The AIG aims to facilitate active participation in ATS assemblies, showcase outstanding research through abstract sessions and awards, foster collaboration and networking opportunities, engage the African diaspora, act as a liaison between ATS and thoracic societies in Africa, support mentorship for young researchers, and contribute valuable input to the ATS International Health Committee.

[Sign up to receive the AIG Newsletter here!](#)



**ATS 2024**

## ATS 2024- SEND IN YOUR ABSTRACTS



ATS 2024 is scheduled to hold in San Diego, California between May 17-22, 2024.

There is still an opportunity to submit abstracts, specifically late breaking abstracts, as the deadline for submission is set for 5 p.m. ET on Wednesday, January 31, 2024.

We are all encouraged to send in abstracts, case reports and plan to participate in this conference.

Click [here](#) and don't miss your chance. San Diego has always been one of ATS's favorite conference venues.

## ATS 2024 AIG SYMPOSIUM



Get ready for an exciting and impactful event in 2024! The African Interest Group (AIG) Symposium is set to return during the ATS Conference in San Diego, scheduled for Sunday, May 19. This upcoming symposium promises to be a focal point for professionals dedicated to advancing lung health across the African continent.

Building on the success of the 2023 symposium, where Dr. Christian Bime's inspiring keynotes emphasized the importance of collaboration to advance lung health in Africa, the 2024 symposium will offer a platform for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and networking. It's an opportunity to connect with like-minded colleagues and partners, all working towards a common goal.

Make sure to mark your calendars and plan to attend the 2024 AIG Symposium. Stay tuned for more updates as we get closer to the date. Join us in making a significant impact on the global health future!



## INSIGHTS FROM 2023 - THE AIG ADVOCATES FOR PARTNERSHIPS FOR CRITICAL CARE IN AFRICA

The AIG 2023 annual symposium was focused on building up partnerships to advance critical care in Africa. Dr. Christian Bime highlighted the need to shift from a "deficit model" to an "asset model" when addressing critical care challenges.

Dr. Bime shared success stories from various African countries and stressed the importance of partnerships, including the involvement of former French colonies. He advocated for a systems framework approach, involving multiple stakeholders like patients, local institutions, and international partners.

Key strategies included effective communication, stakeholder inclusion, strategic advocacy, patience, publication of high-quality articles, and setting clear objectives with timelines. The AIG's symposium emphasized collaboration, celebrating successes, and fostering partnerships to improve critical care in Africa.

## MECOR 2024 IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PAN AFRICAN THORACIC SOCIETY



We are thrilled to announce the 2024 edition of the MECOR Africa, organized in collaboration with the Pan African Thoracic Society (PATS). This event will take place in Brackenhurst, Kenya, from September 16th to September 20th, 2024.

MECOR (Methods in Epidemiologic, Clinical, and Operations Research) is a pioneering initiative aimed at bolstering lung health across the globe. The PATS MECOR program, one of the oldest courses outside of Latin America, commenced in 2007 with a singular mission: to enhance the understanding of research's pivotal role in medical practice and the acquisition of new knowledge.

MECOR Africa 2024 is designed for clinical and academic physicians, as well as public health professionals across African countries. The program helps participants understand how research informs medical practice and fosters the acquisition of new knowledge. [Click here for more information, and registration deadlines.](#)

### MECOR Levels of Training:

**Level 1:** Introduction to research methods, study designs, and protocol development. No prior research experience is necessary.

**Level 2:** Advanced training, focusing on research procedures, statistical analysis, and quality control. Institutional review board approval is required for Level 2 entry.

**Level 3:** Advanced research skills, manuscript writing, and grant proposal development.

**Skills Workshops:** MECOR offers practical workshops in spirometry and air quality monitoring, providing hands-on experience. Equipment loans are available from PATS to support students' research projects.

MECOR Africa 2024 promises a transformative experience. Save the date and join us in Brackenhurst, Kenya, as we work together to enhance lung health across Africa through research and collaboration.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Join us for a series of enlightening scientific sessions at the **International Participant Center (IPC)** during the ATS 2024 Conference! These sessions promise to be engaging and informative, covering a wide range of topics in the field of pulmonary medicine.

### Sunday, May 19

**11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.:** Using online tools to increase global research capacity in pediatric pulmonology: The VIPPRA and MECOR experience.

**1:15 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.:** Dissecting Health Issues in a LMIC for Effective Solutions: the tale of Three Diseases.

**6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.:** African Interest Group Symposium and Networking Session.

### Monday, May 20

**9:30 a.m. – 11:00am:** Clinical Year in Review (Global Health and Tuberculosis - *Location TBD*)

**11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.:** Buenos Dias ATS Session: Lung cancer screening in Europe and Latin America: Time to move forward.

**1:15 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.:** Stop TB Session: There's Nothing Latent About Latent.

### Tuesday, May 21

**1:30 a.m. – 2:15 p.m.:** Respiratory medical devices in low- and middle-income countries needs and how to alleviate the problem.

**3:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.:** The New Face of Cystic Fibrosis, a Diverse and Global Disease.

Don't miss these exceptional sessions, where experts will share their insights and research findings, contributing to the

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR INTERNATIONAL ATTENDEES OF ATS 2024

### VISA, PASSPORT, AND INVITATION LETTER DETAIL

If you plan to attend the ATS 2024 International Conference and will be traveling to San Diego, CA from countries other than the United States, please be aware of the U.S. passport and visa policies for citizens and visitors. [Click here for more information.](#)

The American Thoracic Society provides an official letter of invitation for ATS 2024 International Conference attendees. The letter of invitation, though not required for the visa application, can assist as a supporting document. This letter does not guarantee admittance into the U.S. but can provide compelling evidence for immigration officials to consider. Access this [link](#) to get your Invitation Letter from ATS website.

You may generate a customized letter by filling out the website form or request that one be mailed to you by e-mailing your name, address, passport number, and arrival and departure dates to [membership@thoracic.org](mailto:membership@thoracic.org). Please be sure the letter of invitation is issued to the name as it appears on your passport and not the name that is in your ATS membership profile.

### ATS INTERNATIONAL TRAINEE & MECOR PROGRAM SCHOLARSHIPS (ITS)

The ATS International Health and Membership Committees are delighted to introduce the ATS International Trainee Scholarships (ITS), aimed at offering scholarship support to international trainees for their attendance at the ATS International Conference.

**Award Components:** Each ITS award package encompasses several valuable components, ensuring a comprehensive experience for recipients.

Applications were completed through the ATS International Conference abstract submission process, if the program criteria's were met by the applicant and the correspondent box was checked in the Affirmations section of the online submission program.

ATS grants 35 International Trainee Scholarships to deserving individuals. ATS places a strong emphasis on diversity and inclusion, and the selection of awardees takes into consideration both the abstract scores provided by the Assemblies and the geographical representation, encompassing low, middle, and high-income countries.

For more information, [click here.](#)

## CONGRATULATIONS!



The ATS AIG congratulates Dr Obianuju Ozoh for her special recognition during ATS 2023 as the recipient of the World Lung Health Award. This award is a testament to the great strides that is being achieved by a new generation of lung health specialists and researchers in Africa.

The World Lung Health Award recognizes contributions to improving world lung health in the area of

translational or implementation research, delivery of healthcare, continuing education or care of patients with lung disease, or related political advocacy with a special emphasis on efforts that have the potential to eliminate gender, racial, ethnic, or economic health disparities worldwide.

To nominate a colleague for the 2024 award, please access ATS [website](#).

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS OF AFRICAN INTEREST

There has been a lot of interest in pulmonary function and race adjustments in the last few years and its implications. There have been many publications and arguments about the risk of under recognition and/or over diagnosis of lung disease in minority populations. Below are some of the recent publications about lung research of relevance to African populations:

Bonner, Sidra N., et al. "Clinical implications of removing race-corrected pulmonary function tests for African American patients requiring surgery for lung cancer." *JAMA surgery* 158.10 (2023): 1061-1068. [\[Access the publication\]](#)

Baugh, Aaron D., et al. "Reconsidering the utility of race-specific lung function prediction equations." *American journal of respiratory and critical care medicine* 205.7 (2022): 819-829. [\[Access the publication\]](#)

Mabille, Dorien, et al. "Impact of pulmonary African trypanosomes on the immunology and function of the lung." *Nature communications* 13.1 (2022): 7083. [\[Access the publication\]](#)

Bhakta, Nirav R., et al. "Race and ethnicity in pulmonary function test interpretation: an official American Thoracic Society Statement." *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine* 207.8 (2023): 978-995. [\[Access the publication\]](#)

Holland, Rachel, Cole Bowerman, and Sanja Stanojevic. "The contribution of anthropometry and socioeconomic status to racial differences in measures of lung function: a systematic review." *Chest* 162.3 (2022): 635-646. [\[Access the publication\]](#)

Marciniuk, Darcy D., et al. "Effect of Race and Ethnicity on Pulmonary Function Testing Interpretation." *Chest* 164.2 (2023): 461-475. [\[Access the publication\]](#)

Eze, Joy Nkiru, et al. "Respiratory symptoms and lung function among inmates in a Nigerian prison: a cross sectional study." *BMC pulmonary medicine* 22.1 (2022): 1-10. [\[Access the publication\]](#)

Masekela, Refiloe, et al. "Stop normalizing poverty: How can African children achieve their true lung health potential?." *Journal of the Pan African Thoracic Society* 4.1 (2023): 3-7. [\[Access the publication\]](#)

Awokola, B. I., et al. "Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in sub-Saharan Africa." *The International Journal of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease* 26.3 (2022): 232-242. [\[Access the publication\]](#)

Nkereuwem, Esin, et al. "Reduced lung function and health-related quality of life after treatment for pulmonary tuberculosis in Gambian children: a cross-sectional comparative study." *Thorax* 78.3 (2023): 281-287. [\[Access the publication\]](#)

Schluger, Neil W. "The vanishing rationale for the race adjustment in pulmonary function test interpretation." *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine* 205.6 (2022): 612-614. [\[Access the publication\]](#)

Zhao, Joy, et al. "Racial and ethnic disparities in antifibrotic therapy in idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis." *Respirology* (2023). [\[Access the publication\]](#)

Non, Amy L., Kathryn Akong, and Douglas J. Conrad. "Is it time to end race and ethnicity adjustment for pediatric pulmonary function tests?." *Pediatric Pulmonology* (2023). [\[Access the publication\]](#)

Bhakta, Nirav R., et al. "Addressing race in pulmonary function testing by aligning intent and evidence with practice and perception." *Chest* 161.1 (2022): 288-297. [\[Access the publication\]](#)