The Ethiopian Medical Laboratory Association (EMLA) has undertaken its 22nd annual conference and continuing professional development from 03 - 05 May 2017 at Jimma University, Jimma, Ethiopia. The main theme of the conference was ‘Laboratory Medicine: Patient Deserves Most’. A one day pre-conference workshop was held on ‘Best Phlebotomy Practice and Pre-analytical Variables’ on 03 May 2017.

On his welcoming address Dr Gemeda Abebe, president of EMLA, indicated that EMLA is one of the oldest and biggest professional society in Ethiopia and that EMLA was registered as per the Ethiopian government law of charities and Society proclamation number 621-2009. He stressed
that this 22nd annual conference of EMLA is unique in many aspects: firstly, this annual conference is the first in its kind to be held out of Addis Ababa and by an academic institution because of the gracious hosting support of Jimma University who had also taken the first initiative to launch BSc program in Medical Laboratory Technology in 1995 in the country. Secondly, it is at the time when many health facilities in Ethiopia are suffering from lack of laboratory personnel which needs concerted and long lasting intervention. The president also described the objectives of EMLA and underlined that in the past years EMLA has made huge progress to attain the core objectives. He addressed that profile and number of EMLA’s members has improved, many need based trainings for lab personnel were undertaken, professional advice and opinion support were provided to MoH and its subsidiary agencies, scholarly journal-Ethiopian journal of Laboratory Medicine (EJLM) 3rd volume is published and biannual newsletter is also maintained. He also emphasized that production of the lab personnel alone is not the only solution for the prevailing shortage of human power, but also retention schemes and respecting the rights of the professionals that they deserve need to be worked on rigorously by FMOH. He underlined that the lab work is hazardous by itself and yet hazard allowance is not indicated for lab personnel who are working with HIV, MDR/XDR TB, HBV, etc. Moreover, the president addressed that EMLA has maintained recognizing top ranking students of medical laboratory sciences from different universities in the country on its annual conferences. He also addressed that scientific sessions (that include panel discussions on sub-thematic areas, state of the art CPD lectures by renowned experts, oral and poster presentations) from esteemed colleagues and exhibitors would make the major share of the event; where this is considered as an ideal opportunity to share knowledge and gain deeper insight into all aspects of Laboratory Medicine not only by participating in the conference, attending oral and poster presentations, but also by visiting the exhibitions where all the latest technological advances in lab medicine would be displayed.
On the other hand, Mr Lealem Gedefaw, head of the School of Medical Laboratory Sciences of Jimma University, has forwarded his keynote address. After expressing his honor to deliver the keynote address, Mr Lealem congratulated EMLA for the excellent arrangement of the event which is its first time to be hosted out of Addis Ababa. He expressed his appreciation to Jimma University for hosting the conference which is considered as the second history for the profession, in that it is the first time to be hosted out of Addis Ababa. He recognized the efforts of EMLA’s Jimma Chapter Office and the committee led by Mr Waqtola Cheneke who have worked very hard to prepare this annual conference. He then described the genealogy of the School of Medical Laboratory Sciences which was established in 1988 from the then diploma level up to the current in which PhD program is running.

Prof Mirkuzie Wolde, vice president, JU and Director of Institute of Health of Jimma University, has forwarded his key note address as well as opening speech on behalf of the president of the Jimma University president-Prof Fikre Lemmesa. He addressed that Jimma University is known for hosting such valuable academic events and that it is a privilege for JU to host this event which is the first of its kind outside of Addis Ababa. He also described that the role of professional associations in promoting the exchange of knowledge, ideas and experiences is indispensible. He congratulated the association on its success in sustaining the association since 1964 starting with only 49 members and now having more than 5000 in total and organized 22 annual conferences including this one. He put his hope that EMLA can play a significant role by promoting the contribution of the science of Medical Laboratory to improving the quality of health services. He promised that the organization of the conference at JU is only the beginning and he assured that JU will collaborate and work together on several matters related to the field.
After the conference was officially opened by the vice president of the University, Prof Mirkuzie Wolde, best Medical laboratory student award was undertaken by the award committee chair, Dr Berhanu Seyoum. After the award, plenary session was undertaken on the sub-thematic topics of the conference. Oral and poster presentations of scientific papers were also undertaken.

On the last day, business meeting was held to elect general assembly’s chair and secretary in which Dr Gizachew Yismaw and Mr Estifanos Kebede was elected for the respective position to serve for the next 4 years. Mr Gizachew Tadesse, executive director of EMLA, reported detail activity report of the association in the year. Moreover, the assembly heard report from independent auditor, Mr Solomon, and made thorough discussion on the reports. Finally, before the official closure of the conference by the president of the association, Dr Gemeda Abebe, best abstracts award ceremony for both the oral and poster presentations were undertaken. Conference resolution was compiled and the program adjourned.
Acknowledgement

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1. Federal Ministry of Health (MOH)
2. Jimma University (JU)
3. Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST)
4. Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI)
5. Food, Medicine and Healthcare Administration and Control Authority (FMHACA)
6. Challenge TB-Ethiopia (CTB)
7. Chemonics International/GHSC-PSM-Ethiopia
8. USAID Private Health Sector Project
9. Ethiopian Medical Association (EMA)
10. Centers for Disease Control – Ethiopia (CDC-Ethiopia)
11. Becton Dickinson East Africa Ltd
12. Jourilabs-Manufacturing Industry
13. A Afro German Chemicals EST PLC
14. Medica Pharma PLC
15. Shenzhen Mindray Biomedical Electronics Co. Ltd

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