

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

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*Kenechukwu O. Chudy-Onwugaje, MD, FACG*

### RESPONSIBILITIES AS STATED IN THE ACG BYLAWS

This Committee shall be responsible for developing materials and program concepts to address the needs and interests of the College's international membership and promoting the ACG in the international community.

### OBJECTIVES

1. Examine the Annual Meeting for enhancements that would make it more attractive and comfortable to international members by identifying topics of global interest.
2. Consider issues that would make membership of the ACG more attractive and feasible for international gastroenterologists.
3. Consider tangible benefits of membership for international members.
4. Review College publications to identify those which would have value to international members.
5. Establish guidelines for co-sponsorship of carefully selected international meetings by the ACG; coordinate planning of these programs working closely with the Educational Affairs Committee.
6. Oversee the applications and selection of the recipients of the International Training Grants and review the formal final report from the recipients of their experience, including a letter from their mentor.
7. Evaluate the international component of the ACG website.
8. Work with the Board of Governors to clarify roles and responsibilities of International Governors.
9. Perform periodic surveys of international members regarding ACG services to work towards developing materials and programs specifically designed to address the needs and interests of our international members.
10. Host the International Attendee Reception at the ACG Annual Meeting.

## *International Relations Committee (cont.)*

### COMMITTEE REPORT

#### **International Training Grants**

The Committee is responsible for soliciting applicants and evaluating proposals for two International GI Training Grants. One grant supports a gastroenterologist from outside the U.S. to come for training in North America. The other provides support to send a member practicing in North America for short-term specialized training abroad. The applications were reviewed and scored by the Grant Review Subcommittee, and subsequently discussed by the full Committee, with approval of the Board of Trustees. This year, two recipients were selected for the International Training Grant and one for the North American International Training Grant.

#### **2025 International Training Grant Awardees**

Dr. Mukesh Kumar Ranjan from Nepal is currently an Associate Professor at Chitwan Medical College and plans to study at Massachusetts General Hospital at the Crohn's and Colitis Center under the direction of Dr. Ashwin Anathakrishnan for two months. His objectives are to 1) acquire skills in performing intestinal ultrasound and understanding its role in the management of patients with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD); and 2) to learn about recent treatment practices and advances in IBD management. Nepal is a developing nation with an increasing burden of IBD and an opportunity to learn at a dedicated IBD training center will help Dr. Ranjan bring advanced and innovative ideas and knowledge to his society.

Dr. Oluwafunmilayo Adeniyi from Nigeria is currently an Associate Professor/Pediatrician at the University of Lagos and plans to study at Massachusetts General Hospital under the direction of Drs. Akwi Asombang and Awab Ali Ibrahim for six months. Her clinical and academic interests center on addressing the growing burden of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) in resource-limited settings. She is seeking advanced training in pediatric IBD to deepen her knowledge and technical skills. This opportunity will equip her to address urgent gaps in subspecialty care and research back home, particularly in areas such as diagnostics, multidisciplinary management, and the development of regionally appropriate treatment protocols.

#### **2025 North American International Training Grant Awardees**

Dr. Roupen Djinbanchian is a gastroenterologist at the Montreal University Hospital Center and plans to study at the Hôpital Édouard-Herriot in Lyon, France under the direction of Professor Mathieu Pioche for a one-year advanced endoscopy fellowship. His interests revolve around therapeutic endoscopy, particularly the endoscopic treatment of early GI cancers. Dr. Djinbanchian's motivation for this additional training is driven by the urgent need to acquire third space endoscopy skills and to leverage them in improving minimally invasive care for early gastrointestinal cancers in Canada. This unique opportunity will allow him to address a critical gap in his current practice and elevate the standard of oncologic care for his patients. In Canada – and particularly in Quebec – advanced endoscopic resection techniques such as endoscopic submucosal dissection (ESD) and other third-space procedures (e.g., endoscopic intermuscular dissection, POEM and G-POEM) remain nearly nonexistent in routine practice.

## **Other Initiatives**

### ***ACG Partnership with The African Esophageal Cancer Consortium (AfrECC)***

The Committee is pleased to announce a new partnership with The African Esophageal Cancer Consortium (AfrECC) which is dedicated to reducing the burden of esophageal cancer in Africa through clinical care, education, prevention and research. The organization was formed in 2016 and has grown from 23 members in four countries to more than 175 members in eight countries. More information about AfrECC is available on their website at [www.afreccfoundation.org](http://www.afreccfoundation.org).

In 2025, the College sponsored faculty for four AfrECC meetings and we are continuing to explore other opportunities.

### **Social Media**

- Oversees the ACG International Facebook page, whose membership is over 4,000, and frequently posts ACG content to members
- Collaborates with ACG's International Governors
- Works with ACG's social media staff for international colon cancer awareness and other initiatives

### **International Webinar Series**

- The subcommittee is working with the ACG International Governors and international GI Societies to create joint webinars.
- In 2025, the following international webinars occurred/will occur:
  - January 29, 2025: Peruvian Gastroenterology Association, "ACG *H. pylori* Guidelines" (Spanish language webinar)
  - February 19, 2025: Chinese Society of Gastroenterology, "Current Management of Acute Pancreatitis"
  - June 2, 2025: Brazilian Federation of Gastroenterology, "Role of the Microbiota in Inflammatory Bowel Diseases"
  - July 16, 2025: Colombian Association of Gastroenterology, "Understanding both *C. diff* and Alpha-Gal Syndrome for the Gastroenterologist"
  - August 13, 2025: World Gastroenterology Organisation, "Celiac Disease from a Global Perspective: What is New?"
  - November 11, 2025: Argentine Society of Gastroenterology, "Celiac Disease" (Spanish language webinar)

### **International Abstract Travel Grants**

The International Travel Grants consist of a stipend in the amount of \$2000 each to the presenting author of the three best abstracts submitted by international authors from countries classified by the World Bank as Lower to Lower-Middle Income. The goal of these grants is to encourage research in gastroenterology in Lower to Lower-Middle income countries and inspire researchers to present their research at the ACG Annual Meeting. Recipients are required to attend the ACG Annual Meeting in-person to receive their grant funding. Authors must not be based in or be a citizen of the U.S. or Canada and all work must have been performed outside the U.S. and Canada.

The 2025 Recipients are: Ashesh Das, MBBS (India), Shakhawat Hossain, MD (Bangladesh), and Raja Taha Yaseen TY. Khan, MBBS, FCPS, ESEGH (Pakistan).

### ***International Lunch Session at ACG 2025***

Building on the success of the International Attendee Breakfast Session what was held at ACG 2024 in Philadelphia, the Subcommittee is holding an International Attendee Lunch Session on October 27th at ACG 2025 in Phoenix. The focus of this luncheon, geared to attendees from outside the U.S., is “Global Perspectives in Gastroenterology and Hepatology: Focus on IBD and MASLD.”

### ***International Attendee Reception at ACG 2025***

The Committee is pleased to continue to support the International Attendee Reception which takes place on Sunday, October 26th from 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm at ACG 2025 in Phoenix.

### **ACG Endorsement / Participation in International Meetings**

The Committee works with international societies to identify opportunities for the College to affiliate with international societies, as well as to endorse and support international meetings through participation of ACG leaders as faculty. The following were endorsed/supported in 2025:

#### ***ACG Participation at 2025 International Meetings:***

##### **Japanese Gastroenterology Association 21st Annual Meeting**

February 21 – 22, 2025

Tokyo, Japan

ACG sponsored 1 faculty member for this meeting.

##### **Nigeria Society of Gastroenterology and Hepatology Meeting**

April 4 – 11, 2025

Abuja, Nigeria

ACG sponsored 1 faculty member for this meeting.

##### **Pakistan Society of Gastroenterology and GI Endoscopy Annual Meeting**

April 17 – 20, 2025

Peshawar, Pakistan

ACG sponsored 1 faculty member for this meeting.

##### **Association of West Indian Gastroenterologists (AWIG) Annual Meeting**

May 1 – 3, 2025

Grand Cayman

ACG sponsored 1 faculty member for this meeting.

##### **Pan American Organization Week of Digestive Diseases**

August 28 – 31, 2025

Lima, Peru

ACG sponsored 2 faculty members for this meeting.

##### **Mexican Association of Gastroenterology Annual Meeting**

November 14-18, 2025

Veracruz, Mexico

ACG is sponsoring 2 faculty members for this meeting.

##### **WGO Gastroenterology and Hepatology Training Center Porto**

November 21, 2025

Porto, Portugal

ACG sponsored 1 faculty member for this meeting.

##### **Emirates International Gastroenterology & Hepatology Conference 2025**

December 5-7, 2025

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

ACG co-sponsored this course.

##### **Moroccan Society of Digestive Diseases 49th Annual Congress**

December 11-13, 2025

Agadir-Taghazout, Morocco

ACG sponsored 1 faculty member for this meeting.