



PROGRESS IN AFRICA

L. Nel

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BIOGRAPHY

Professor Louis Nel is based at the University of Pretoria where he has focused on improved understanding and control of lyssaviruses and rabies. His research relies on state of the art methods in molecular biology and includes diagnostic development, vaccinology, immune contraception, viral pathogenesis, host/virus ecology and molecular epidemiology. Prof. Nel assisted the Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC) in various capacities since 2008. In July 2014, he became the Executive Director of GARC.

SUMMARY

Despite being a classic preventable zoonosis with an almost 100% case fatality ratio, rabies remains one of the most neglected diseases in the modern world. To address this neglect, a first major realisation is the need for the effective execution of the 'One Health' concept, in this instance requiring close coordination between animal and human health sectors at the national, regional and continental levels. In the case of Africa, the continent where the per capita death rate from rabies is the highest in the world, a coordinated pan-continental approach to rabies control has been non-existent. To attain a coordinated, inclusive and unified network for rabies control across Africa, the Pan-African Rabies Control Network (PARACON) was established in 2014/2015. It is envisaged that this network will provide a platform to facilitate and promote coordinated and sustainable rabies control strategies and programmes towards the elimination of canine rabies in Africa. PARACON meetings will take place at regular intervals and will be centred on the One Health approach, among others, by inviting the involvement of key focal persons from both the medical and veterinary sectors from the participating nations. The inaugural PARACON meeting was held in South Africa in June 2015 and was focused around interactive discussion sessions and workshops, whilst updating country representatives on the tools available to aid countries in their efforts towards developing and implementing sustainable rabies intervention strategies. Experts from various global organisations, institutions and industry participated in the discussions and shared their experience and expertise during the workshop sessions.

The workshops focused on the latest format of the rabies blueprint platform (www.rabiesblueprint.com), which in the broadest sense assists with various aspects of a control and elimination campaign, including:

1. an educational and advocacy drive,
2. the improvement of surveillance and diagnosis,
3. the systematic monitoring of progress, together with the stepwise approach towards rabies elimination, a planning tool for assisting countries to pursue freedom from human rabies transmitted by dogs.