



BSZ Biomedical Society of Zambia

Background

The Biomedical Society of Zambia (BSZ) was founded on 27th April, 1968 under the name "Zambia Society of Medical Laboratory Technology (ZSMLT) by pioneer graduates trained in a diploma course in Medical Technology at the Evelyn Hone College of Applied arts and Commerce. The establishment was necessitated by the need for the profession to have a platform of representation on medical laboratory matters to both the Ministry of Health (MoH) as well as the Medical Council of Zambia (MCZ), which by then had strong recognition only for Medical Doctors, Nurses and Pharmacy professionals. The offices were located in Ndola (Copperbelt Province) in the Northern region of Zambia and its membership in the early stages included mostly graduates from the Evelyn Hone College (EHC) diploma programme, as well as certificate holders from the two institutions that were offering certificate training (Ndola and Chikankata Training schools).

Training

Training at Ndola Central Hospital (NCH) started in 1973 while training at Chikankata Mission Hospital formally opened much earlier and commenced using a standardized curriculum together with the NCH College in the same year. Initially Chikankata trained laboratory assistants in basic laboratory skills whose purpose was to work in their mission hospital as well as in surrounding facilities. ZSMLT was instrumental in the development of the first curriculum for the Medical Laboratory Technology in Zambia in 1972 that led to the formal trainings to be offered at Chikankata and Ndola Central Hospital. Senior members at that time who had received further training in Europe were appointed to be external examiners for the course. Some of the examiners include:

- Mr E Chimolula – Haematology
- Mr Mwenda – Parasitology
- Mr Mutwale – Microbiology
- Mr John Masona – Biochemistry
- Mr Raphael Mulenga - Histology

Membership and operations

There was a significant presence of expatriate laboratory professionals working in the laboratory sector at that time starting from the years before the country got its independence from the British Colonial rule in 1964. The indigenous members were working in various sections of the sector categorized into four main categories:

- Civil service – Public Sector/Government owned institutions
- Faith based/Mission institutions
- Mining companies running health institutions
- The Private sector

ZSMLT Members from the mines mostly concentrated on the Copperbelt Province where these mines operated and owned health facilities to take care of the health of their workers and families.

Due to the vastness of the country (area = 752.000 km²), the society was portioned into two regions for administrative convenience namely;

1. The Northern Region covering provinces in the northern aspect of the country.
2. The Southern Region covering the four provinces in the southern aspect.

The two regions were each headed by a vice president and both vice presidents reported to one national president.

In July, 1968 the Society was accorded a seat of representation in the Ministry of Health (MoH) to administer issues pertaining to the profession and its practice, a seat on the MCZ Board (now Health Professions Council of Zambia HPCZ) to support the regulation of registration of biomedical practitioners; and another seat in the Department of Technical Education and Vocational Training (DTEVT), to support the establishment of training of medical laboratory sciences in Zambia.

The Office for the ZSMLT was later moved from Ndola to Lusaka, the capital city of the country in the year 1984.

ZSMLT used to produce a conference issue of



2012: The Biomedical Society of Zambia celebrates the National Laboratory Professionals week in Lusaka.





the Journal of Zambia Medical Laboratory Technology and the last publication was published in 1982. The publication focused on Medical Laboratory news.

Current status

The mission of the society is **to promote professionalism through training and practice of Laboratory medicine, and support the provision and access of cost effective quality laboratory services as close to the family as possible**. The society also promotes and enhances biomedical science knowledge and practice, and its utilization for human health and well-being.

The objectives of the society are;

- To unite Medical Laboratory Professionals in the Republic of Zambia and foster closer relations between its members and other members of the health professionals
- To create a forum for information exchange and dissemination among its members through electronic and print media; publications, scientific conferences, workshops, laboratory celebrations and seminars.
- To cater for and promote the medical laboratory professionalism and social welfare of its members.
- To collaborate with other members of the health profession both nationally and internationally, for the purpose of improvement and advancements of laboratory medicine.
- To act as registrar for all its members in the country and beyond and to have Society's Branches within the Republic of Zambia.
- To attain and maintain a high standard of competence, proficiency and conduct among members and to preserve the dignity and professional status of Laboratory Medicine.
- To exercise professional supervision and instill discipline over members of the Society and to maintain their status recognition.
- To participate in the development of Laboratory Medicine in Zambia and establish media for publishing and circulating news and materials relating to Biomedical Science.
- To disseminate the most up-to-date information relating to the practice of Laboratory Medicine, and establish and maintain close liaison with institutions which have similar ideals and aims.
- To establish means whereby members of the Society can meet to discuss common problems, by lectures, technical demonstrations, exhibitions, seminars, conferences and similar means, to stimulate and maintain interest in members.
- To advise relevant authorities on matters relating to the practice of Laboratory Medicine and required standards of the Society based on the profession's ethical behaviour performance standards.



- The Society shall not participate or pursue political or union matters other than those for which it will specifically be asked or instructed to advise on, or make recommendations, by either its members or other relevant authorities.
- To strive to improve the skill and knowledge and maintain an open mind to scientific advancement and to assist in the training of biomedical technologists and Scientists.
- To purchase or otherwise acquire, hold or own movable or immovable property necessary for the purpose of giving effect to the other objectives of the Society.

The Society secretariat details are:

Physical Address: **Plot 7618, Off Buluwe Road, Woodlands, Lusaka**
 Box Office: **Private Bag NM 68 Northmead, Lusaka, Zambia**
 Email address: **biomedicalsocietyofzambia@yahoo.com**
 Website: **www.biomedicalsocietyofzambia.org**

These premises act as an administrative headquarters for BSZ and are also a continuous professional development center. The office is managed by an administrative officer who is supported by all national executive members. The society uses its revenue raised from membership fees, contributions and donation from partners to fund the rental and administrative costs of the office.

In 2016, BSZ entered into an agreement with the Public Service Management Division (PSMD) to obtain officially annual subscription for members in the Public Sector through direct payroll deduction. This will guarantee constant flow of income to conduct society activities.

Membership of the Society includes both practicing and non-practicing biomedical personnel in the private and public health institutions that include health facilities, veterinary, teaching, military, faith-based, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and research industries. It has approximately 200 members who are duly committed and participate in various society activities. However, the profession has a general representation of about 1500 personnel with training at various levels that include; Biomedical Technicians, Biomedical Technologists, Biomedical Scientists, Biomedical Specialists (Biomedical Scientists with Post Graduate qualification – MSc and PhD) and Medical Doctors. Membership is open to biomedical sciences students, affiliates, honorary and life members apart from full members. BSZ is a non-partisan, non-political open-membership organization for all health workers committed to developing the skills and knowledge of the biomedical scientist in order to become an effective member of the health care team.

The seat on HPCZ board is now rotational and the last BSZ term ended in 2014. This



left the society with no platform to participate actively in regulation of the profession. Upon several discussions and engagements with HPCZ, the Minister of Health and his Permanent Secretary, HPCZ created committees with two representatives from each professional body. The BSZ henceforth participates in HPCZ activities through the Biomedical and Oral Health Committee.

On 14 January 1997, the society changed its name from Zambia Society of Medical Laboratory Technology (ZSMLT) to Biomedical Society of Zambia (BSZ). The Society is registered with the Registrar of Societies in line with the Laws of Zambia. It coordinates and organises various activities that include;

- Annual general meetings where activities of the previous year are reviewed, reports are presented and plans for the following year determined.
- Elections to the office of leadership for the society are held every two years.
- Biomedical Laboratory Professionals Week (Laboratory Professionals Week) where laboratory professionals interact with the general public and other health workers to showcase their works and explain the importance of laboratory diagnostics to the delivery of quality health care.
- Hold monthly scientific meetings at institutions of work to discuss various aspects of science and the biomedical practice.

Key achievements include:

- Influencing the formulation of the national medical laboratory policy of 1997.
- Curriculum review and development contributor for the diploma and degree programs
- Annual commemoration of laboratory professionals' week.
- Key member of the National Laboratory Technical Working Group chaired by the Ministry of Health.
- Representation on HPCZ board for two terms
- Participate in activities of the HPCZ through representation on the Biomedical and Oral Health Committee
- Strategic partner to various vendors dealing in biomedical equipment.
- Hosting scientific symposia in collaboration with partners and MoH.
- Annual awards presentation ceremonies officiated by MoH.
- Successful lobbying with government regarding the non-closure of the biomedical training college in Ndola.
- Successful submissions regarding the upgrading of the Ndola College from Diploma to Degree programs.
- Facilitate scholarships with international organisations and cooperating partners

- for members to attend present scientific findings at international for a
- Facilitated the Clinical Chemistry EQA program implementation for selected laboratories with International Federations of Clinical Chemistry and Medicine and RANDOX diagnostics and now with the Royal College of Pathologists in Australasia Quality Assurance Program (RCAQAP).

BSZ is now a member of several international professional bodies including;

- The African Society for Laboratory Medicine (ASLM)
- African Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (AFCC)
- The International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Medicine (IFCC)
- The International Federation of Biomedical Laboratory Sciences (IFBLS)

ZSMLT used to be a member of the International Association of Medical Laboratory Technologists in the 70s.

BSZ continues to provide technical guidance and professional representation for its members to stakeholders that include the MoH and the Government of the republic of Zambia, HPCZ, cooperating partners and international bodies it is affiliated to. It plans to acquire its own office premises in order to effectively run the activities of the society and facilitate provision of well-structured Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs. This will also model it to eventually engage with relevant stakeholders and get the mandate to provide fully regulation for its members and solidarity for their welfare.

