

Focusing on health research and education

AFREhealth Symposium 2019

The third AFREhealth symposium was held in Lagos, Nigeria, 5-9 August 2019. It was hosted by the Universities of Ibadan and Lagos and their Medical Education Partnership Initiative in Nigeria (MEPIN) partners.¹ It was attended by 350 delegates from 29 countries (7 of these outside Africa).

The theme of the meeting was 'Strengthening Health Research, Education and Service Delivery for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa'. There were several sub-themes:

1. Governance, leadership and global health
2. Health research and the SDGs
3. Health professions education and the SDGs
4. Health service delivery and quality of care
5. HIV and non-communicable diseases (NCDs)
6. Genomics and human health in Africa.

The three-day symposium was preceded by two days of workshops that included; mentored-research training, mentoring the mentees, global health diplomacy, strengthening interprofessional HIV training in Africa, research and writing for impact and interprofessional education and collaborative practice: taking hands for changes. There were seven plenary sessions and several breakout sessions as well as in-conference workshops.

This is a summary of the key points from the plenaries:

Governance, leadership and global health

There is a need to prioritise country commitments (political, human resources, financial and research focus) in order to achieve the SDGs

Health systems research and SDGs

There should be a paradigm shift in priority setting in health research towards achieving the SDGs through, identification of research focus, focus on funding, capacity development, implementation research and increased



advocacy and engagement of policy makers for sustainable use/integration of research outputs in social policy.

Health professions education and the SDGs

It was noted that disease dynamics had changed due to improved passage across nations and continents. It was highlighted that accreditation towards improved quality of training is essential, curricula should be responsive to changing disease patterns and societal needs and inter-professional collaboration in training for holistic response to disease dynamics should be emphasised.

Health service delivery and quality of care

Innovative approaches to service delivery in Africa is feasible and scalable through partnership and collaborative efforts and sustainability, Innovation and Implementation are essential for effective health service delivery and quality of care.

HIV and NCDs

Epidemiologic transition is taking place in Africa as evidenced by the combination of HIV and NCDs which is becoming a threat to successful case management and achievement of SDGs. Noted was the fact that collaboration between clinical and basic science researchers will strengthen case diagnosis and management.

Genomics and human health

There is very sparse genomic research in Africa (only 3% of African database available for Genome-Wide Association Study (GWAS) despite the fact that there is great potential for the study of new strains of infectious agents and early detection of malignancies (epigenomics).

For each stream in the theme a few recommendations were given as follows

1. Strengthening health research: build capacity; improve funding; cost-effective utilisation of resources; collaboration
2. Strengthening education: implement inter-professional collaborations; improve training curricula; develop effective mentorship
3. Improving service delivery: engage policy makers; ensure multidisciplinary disease campaigns; ensure access to affordable care which must be sustainable; advocate implementation of evidence-based interventions

The poster sessions ran from 8-9 August and had presentations from various countries across the continent categorised along the conference sub themes.

The symposium in Lagos provided a great opportunity for learning, sharing ideas on better networking and also promoting scientific writing.

References

1. See www.ui.edu.ng/MEPI