Social accountability: from evidence to action

The Network: Towards Unity For Health annual conference 2019

The Network: Towards Unity For Health (TUFH),is a network of networks that exists to achieve Universal Access and Equitable Health Systems by serving as the global connector between the leading health academic institutions, health institutions and associations, community health institutions and individuals (thought leaders, professionals and students). TUFH serves as the global "Community of Practice" collectively sharing, designing, collaborating, and developing policy, and educating and advocating for universal access and equitable health delivery policy to the world's leading global health organisations, national/regional governments, and NGOs. The TUFH's 2019 annual conference was held at Flinders University in Darwin, Australia, 10-13 September. The main theme was "Social accountability: from evidence to action". It brought together an international audience to discuss social accountability and further explore the four sub-themes of:

1. First nations' health
2. Remote and rural health
3. Interprofessional education and practice
4. Future leaders in socially accountable education and research.

Dr Elsie Kiguli-Malwadde, The Director Health Work Force Education and Development,at the African Center for Global health and Social transformation (ACHEST) was approved by the general assembly to become the Secretary General of the Network TUFH. She had been Vice SG for the past 4 years. She replaced Henry Campos from Brazil, becoming the first African Woman to take this position.

The three-day meeting was proceeded by the board meeting, a Student Network Organisation meeting and a solutions day challenge – a 'thinking journey' in which global thought leaders collectively design, test and reach consensus on global recommendations. In the case of TUFH it was designed to bring consensus on social accountability, interprofessional education, population health and remote/rural/indigenous populations. Participants included global thought leaders composed of TUFH board members, advisory board members, strategic partnership representatives and industry thought leaders.

There were four very provocative keynote speeches addressing the sub-themes, many oral and poster presentations. At the end of the meeting the Network TUFH came out with a declaration indicating TUFH commitment to being a vibrant and effective network of networks that realises, implements, and assesses the effectiveness of the above actions. It noted that

- The world desires and the future deserves Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Equitable Health Care for all including the disadvantaged and neglected minorities.
- The voices of women, students, non-health sectors and communities are not adequately represented or invited to the table where the health system and funding decisions are made.
- There is a disconnect between the wisdom of the elders and the ideas of the youth where both voices are often lost in healthcare discussion.
- That structures for recognition and replication of institutions and their partner communities who adopt and implement social accountability and Interprofessional education and practice best practices rarely exist.
- Health Professions Education and Training should be tailored to and address community needs rather than a top-down tiered process.

- Global siloed policy recommendations consuming the majority of financial resources are majorly ineffective as they are not developed with and by the communities they are targeted to impact and do not often engage and support the work of local clinicians and teams.

They committed to:-

- Working towards a global effort of caring for each other, returning the human spirit to health care including community voices, culture, lived experiences, empathy, and compassion.
- Advocacy to ensure the voice of marginalised populations are adequately.
- Frequent and consistent communication in the creation of priorities for local action in the health sector and with non-health sectors.
- Capitalising on the advancement of technology to enhance the sharing and education for professionals and students regionally and globally.
- Ensuring that alternative medicine practitioners, community health workers, and emerging healthcare professionals are engaged, competent, certified, and represented in national and institutional policies and practices.
- Preparing the next generation of health workforce leadership by creating greater opportunities for students, mentorship being one of the opportunities.
- Providing international vehicles for the structural implementation of Social Accountability and Interprofessional Education and practice.
- Ensuring training from communities, in communities by communities and for communities.

This was a successful meeting.