

Healthy living

The general thrust of this issue of the AHJ is 'healthy living'. There is an emerging drive to promote the message that health is inborn and can be maintained in an equilibrium where behaviour that promotes and creates health outweighs behavior and lifestyles that take away and destroy health. I am one of the champions of this growing movement which has been accelerated recently by the publication of Lord Nigel Crisp book *Health is made at home; hospitals are for repairs*.

The Opinion kicks off with a discussion on equitable access to vaccines and other life-saving therapies by all people and the challenges that Africa is facing in accessing COVID-19 vaccines. There is an article on immunisation by a consortium of authors based at academic institutions in Kenya, South Africa and Uganda. They present immunisation as a pillar of primary health care for healthy lives with a growing list of vaccine-preventable diseases. Importantly, they also discuss vaccine hesitancy and the need to counter ongoing anti-vaccine campaigns round the world.

Dr Ian Clarke from the health private sector in Uganda writes about how humans have moved from being hunter-gatherers to leading sedentary lives, resulting in adverse consequences for our health. He guides us on how to exercise our bodies and minds to maintain health with the adage "use it or lose it".

Dr David Okello writes about healthy ageing, presenting a global perspective and pointing out the challenge of the elderly in transitioning rural African settings. He provides a list of what actions countries should take to address the needs of the growing numbers of the elderly. Dr Okello has another article co-authored with me

and a young colleague, Paul Emulu, on our experience of Inter-Sectoral collaboration for community health in the Ngora district of Uganda. Our message is that it is possible to empower communities to take charge of their health and wellbeing through social cohesion, health promotion and disease prevention as the foundation of sustainable, responsive and resilient health systems.

From Zimbabwe, we have an article on nutrition for healthy lives partly using the example of the late but long-lived President Robert Mugabe, who preferred traditional African food. Through anthropological lenses they advocate returning to the food and eating habits of our ancestors. Carol Natukunda from ACHEST writes about childhood obesity in the context of COVID-19. The lockdown has been responsible for reduced activity and over eating for some young people. At the same time, there are families who do not have enough food and suffer from malnutrition.

The healthy living theme continues in an article on traffic injuries by Dr. Olive Kobusingye of Makerere University. Africa has the highest rates of road traffic deaths globally, estimated at 26.6 road deaths per 100,000 people per year compared to 18.2 globally, yet the region has the least motorisation of all the world's regions. The UN Global decade of action enabled trauma to get into the SDG3 target 3.6. Healthy living in Africa needs to take this agenda forward with more vigour.

Breastfeeding especially in HIV settings is discussed in detail by Dr Ruth Nduati from the University of Nairobi. Breast feeding is presented as essential for mother and child and a foundation for the future development and capabilities of the child. The bulk of the article details the management of breastfeeding with HIV.

From Ghana we have an article on

Emergency Medicine that calls for integration of this subject into curricula of training schools and advocates for Emergency Medicine to be a mandatory rotation during internships.

Prevention of blindness in Botswana is described by Professor Oathokwa Nkomazana of the University of Botswana, who gives a global, African and Botswana spectrum of the problem of preventable blindness. She draws attention to the 1997 declaration on "the right to sight" and the global movement that followed this declaration. In Botswana, long-term policies, plans and health system reforms have been implemented to respond to needs of the country and more needs to be done.

Among the many virtual conferences taking place, Elsie Kiguli-Malwadde reports on the 5th Bellagio Global Health Education Initiative virtual conference on modern ways of teaching and learning in the digital era.

We recently lost two great African health leaders in Adetokunbo Lucas from Nigeria and George Kanya from Uganda, whose obituaries are part of this issue.

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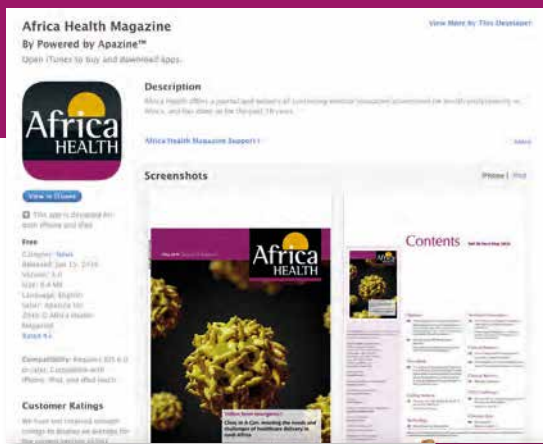
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