

# COVID-19 is still taking centre stage in the world

The July 2021 issue comes as the after-effects of COVID-19 are being felt as the pandemic continues. The AHJ has a number of articles on this topic and specifically on how Africa could strengthen its health systems.

The opinion piece urges each country and the world to take stock of the experience of COVID-19 and apply the lessons learnt to future strategies. A lot is already happening, with many global forums discussing how to better counter future pandemics. The question is what should Africa do. Professor Francis Omaswa concludes that African countries should prioritise the health of their people in national plans. He goes on to explain how this could be implemented.

A team from Lesotho highlights the training of health workers, especially nurses, in problem solving using a Problem Solving for Better Health (PSBH) tool. They conclude that problems that health workers confront in healthcare facilities are common and that if not addressed, they can become maladaptive patterns that adversely affect patient care and staff morale. However, the power to solve a wide range of problems lies within the health workers themselves. The Lesotho experience suggests that PSBH promises to be a low-cost methodology that can be used in other low- and middle-income countries.

Another article written by a team of African Laboratory Scientist explains how they formed the African Consortium on Laboratory Systems Strengthening with the aim of improving the quality of laboratory services in Africa. This has been done through capacity building. The consortium, having identified areas in need of support, has so far conducted three webinars. The presenters were

drawn mainly from universities in Africa and some international experts. The webinars were held successfully and the numbers of attendees from different African countries demonstrated that the concept can be successfully implemented with African experts supported by international experts to address areas of need on a virtual platform. More short courses are planned, aimed at improving the knowledge base of the participants leading to improvement in quality of test results in laboratories in Africa.

There is another article addressing COVID-19 training for healthcare workers in low- and middle-income countries in Africa. The team behind it offers a free online course on training bedside healthcare workers to care for patients with COVID-19. The African Forum for Research and Education in Health (AFREhealth) has partnered with Stanford University to disseminate this free online course on the identification and management of patients with COVID-19. It is a self-directed course and readers of AHJ can access it. AFREhealth is working on developing Portuguese and French versions to broaden the course's reach to healthcare workers throughout Africa. Course information is presented in short, discrete modules of approximately 10 minutes each. The modules focus on the key evidence pertinent to physicians, nurses, and other healthcare workers practising clinically.

Another article analyses the growing mental health burden and the need for integrating mental health with non-communicable diseases (NCDs) using digital interventions. They say that this is even more important now with the side effects of COVID-19. Another article argues that the reproductive decision-making (RDM) process during COVID-19 in Sub-Saharan Africa may differ significantly from what it was before

COVID considering the limited supply of and access to sexual reproductive health services. It highlights the possibility of a large-scale reproductive health crisis in the region and makes the case for research funding and studies on the dynamics of RDM in the time of COVID-19 in SSA. There is an article that explores some of the reasons that have been suggested as to why they are low number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in African countries.

A report on a webinar that was hosted by the African Center for Global Health and Social Transformation (ACHEST) on Ischaemic Heart Disease is included, with a call for people to take charge of their own Health.

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**Elsie Kiguli-Malwade**

([kigulimalwade@achest.org](mailto:kigulimalwade@achest.org))

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