

The 39th global TUFH conference: Moving Forward Together: Unity for Health for All

Reported by Elsie Kiguli-Malwadde

The Network Towards Unity for Health (TUFH) held its annual symposium on August 16-19, 2022, in Vancouver, British Columbia (BC). There were 140 physical attendees, 186 attended virtually. The participants were from 40 countries. It was organized in conjunction with the Coordination Centre of BC, and BC Patient Safety and Quality Council. This was the first conference to have a face to face component since the COVID-19 Pandemic. The last 2 TUFH conferences having been virtual.

TUFH is an international, intersectoral and intergenerational organization that fosters equitable community-oriented health services, education and research, with the goal of improving health locally and globally. We convene innovative health care organizations, universities, community institutions, and thought leaders from all over the world. The theme of the Vancouver conference was "Moving Forward Together: Unity for Health for All". The subthemes were:

- Building Better Together
- Harmony for a Healthy World
- Social Responsibility: Healthcare Conducted Where People and Place Matter
- Learning with Indigenous Peoples Towards Advancing Equity & Wellbeing

The meeting was attended by many people from all over the world. The program varied and was thrilling with 7 Keynotes, 6 workshops, 8 TUFH documentaries, 21 TUFH talks and 268 oral presentations. Those who attended were able to engage in the Keynote Sessions, TUFH Documentaries, TUFH Talks, Workshops, and Oral Presentations. They participated in networking sessions on specific topics—and explored new professional relationships. They learned about local Indigenous cultures and health. They reflected on TUFH's journey over the past 10 years and provided their input into new goals for the next 10 years. Some had exciting private experiences with an Indigenous healer on site. Conference on the Move Visits where participants experienced local community life were organized.

There were also times for relaxation and networking at the opening and closing ceremonies for participants during the reception, and evening events, including a Cultural Dinner and Dance and student gathering. Participants received a warm welcome from the local partners.

Some of the highlights from the Keynote speeches included one that was given by Rabia Khan, an Epidemiologist and Disease detective who uses data and evidence to create real change in the world. Her topic was "Beyond the new normal- what would that look like?". She noted that two years of COVID-19 are behind us and that it is reasonable to think there might be some sense of a return to normalcy, and look away from crisis response. She said that there was no going back to how things were. She asked the audience to be cautious about the talk by businesses and governments on



building back better and moving towards a new normal because hidden in the various invocations of building back better are likely to be disparate visions of what better actually means and who will benefit from it. It is up to each one of us to either help redefine the new normal or sit back and watch it unfold. She explored ideas that could help us start this important conversation about what the future could entail and how we as health professionals can reimagine the future and work towards improving health locally and globally.

Professor Francis Omaswa, the Executive Director of African Centre for Global Health and Social Transformation (ACHEST) gave a key note speech on "Social Responsibility: Healthcare conducted where People and Place matter". He noted that social responsibility calls upon individuals to be accountable for fulfilling their civic duty to benefit society while society also supports individuals. He also said that social responsibility for health is based on the principle that good health starts with individuals who have responsibility for their health through adhering to a lifestyle that does not lead to the loss of health. He noted that individuals within families and communities create conditions for healthy people to remain healthy; ensuring access to household hygiene, quality food, housing, and psychosocial support, among others. He gave an example from Uganda, where during Covid-19, Village Covid Taskforces were established to meet regularly, and mobilize individuals, households, and communities. The communities hence worked with Community Health Workers to provide home-based care and refer suspected cases. The key lessons learned were that organized communities are capable of finding solutions for their health needs and working better with the upstream health system to create conditions that enable socially responsible behavior while holding duty bearers to account.

The health of indigenous people was extensively discussed noting that many face barriers to healthcare, because of lower levels of education, inadequate housing and crowded living conditions, lower income levels, higher rates of unemployment as well as higher rates of incarceration. Many models to address this inequity were discussed.

All in all, it was a successful conference.

Elsie Kiguli-Malwadde is the secretary General of the Network TUFH