

Double Burden of Disease in Africa

The current edition of the Africa Health Journal for July spotlights both communicable and non-communicable diseases. This highlights the dual challenge that Africa is confronting, commonly referred to as the double burden of disease. The continent is engaged in a complex battle against infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and polio, while concurrently tackling the escalating prevalence of non-communicable conditions like mental health disorders and sickle cell disease.

In the opinion piece, Prof. Francis Omaswa talks about the various considerations that should be taken into account as the United Nations General Assembly gathers to deliberate on post-COVID Universal Health Coverage (UHC). He notes that UHC, can only be realized if the people themselves are reached and engaged through Primary Health Care (PHC) that is owned and driven by the communities themselves and where the people participate as a duty and a right. He highlights the fact that the quality of life varies from region to region and even within countries themselves. He elaborates on the achievements made by the different Global Initiatives. He also notes that Civil Society Organisations and academic institutions play a critical role in mobilizing for UHC.

This edition provides essential insights from the realm of healthcare professions, highlighting two significant events. Firstly, a pivotal symposium that took place in Kampala, Uganda, on May 11th - 12th, 2023, organized by the Health Professional Education Partnership Initiative (HEPI-SHSSU) and the East African Health Professionals Educators Association (EAHPEA). During this event, stakeholders emphasized the importance of competency-based learning, enhancing the quality assurance within training institutions, fostering collaborations, and refining supervisory practices. Secondly, we commemorate the establishment of the Eastern Africa FAIMER Regional Institute (EAFRI). Which was officially launched on May 10th, 2023, this institute is a collaborative endeavor involving the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER), Makerere University College of Health Sciences (MakCHS), and Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST). Its primary objective is to enhance healthcare professions education across the East African region.

Epidemiologist and researcher Harriet Kizza-Mayanja Kizza delves into the strides made in tuberculosis management throughout Africa, characterized by groundbreaking diagnostic technologies, refined treatment protocols, heightened patient assistance, and successful strategies for TB infection control. Even with considerable headway, Africa still contends with elevated rates of HIV/AIDS, delayed diagnoses, restricted healthcare access, and obstacles in treatment, underscoring the ongoing need for sustained endeavors against the ailment. Kizza-Mayanja Kizza underscores the promise held by a secure and efficient TB vaccine in substantially aiding the worldwide efforts to control and eliminate tuberculosis.

Mental health experts address the complexities around mental health in Africa and examine the challenges, innovations and policy recommendations that have a potential to shape the future of Africa's mental health care. This article shows that although a lot has been done in the area of mental health, more needs to be done. In conclusion they note the importance of creating culturally appropriate, inclusive treatments that ensure equitable access within the existing health systems. It is worthwhile noting that this is not unique for mental health but applies to all disease conditions.

Several short reports are included in this issue, one on health education intervention on Polio vaccination in Ghana. It describes what was done and how education interventions can increase maternal knowledge on polio in primary care settings using capacity building and refresher training of primary care providers. Two short reports on mental health are included. One from Shamiri Institute exploring the long-term socioeconomic and livelihood impacts of its flagship intervention delivered to Kenyan high school youths since 2018. Shamiri uses a simple psychological intervention to address mental health issues in youths. This shows that such initiatives can go a long way in enhancing UHC. The second report discusses the link between mental and physical health and highlights how to recognise the symptoms, get the right treatment and make lifestyle changes. A short report on SCD in Uganda by the CEO of the Uganda Sickle Cell Rescue Foundation highlights the burden of SCD in Uganda and advocates for increased awareness of the disease to help those affected. All these point towards the education and involvement of individuals in taking care of their health as expounded by Prof. Omaswa in the opinion.

In addition, three articles delve into the realm of online education. Lutz Mücke's contribution provides insight into Lecturio's large-scale e-learning projects, supporting Ethiopian medical students through collaboration with the Ministry of Health. Georgina Radford explores the advantages and challenges of online study.

There is our usual medicine digest and quiz, plenty of news and advertisements.

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Together, we strive to illuminate the path toward improved healthcare and well-being for all Africans.



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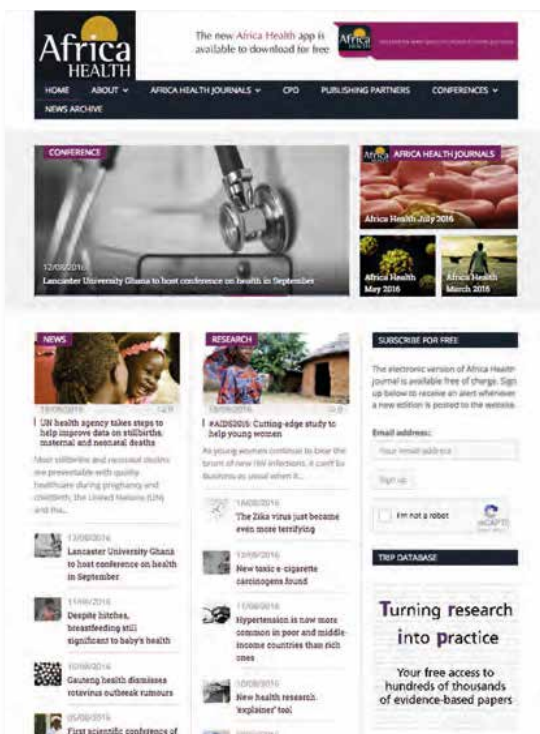
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