Keeping People Healthy



January brings a cluster of global and national health observances that remind us prevention and wellbeing must lead our efforts if we are to build resilient health systems.

This issue opens with an opinion by Dr. David Okello, drawn from the recent East, Central and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC) ministerial meeting in Eswatini. He argues that African health strategies remain skewed toward emergency response and disease control. Dr. Okello calls for a reframing: count health, celebrate health and plan for health. His recommendations, shifting resources to preventive services, strengthening primary care, and embedding health promotion across sectors are practical guideposts for policymakers.

David O. Odhiambo's piece on pharmaceutical sovereignty complements that view by tracing pathways to a more self-reliant African pharmaceutical sector. Leading the African Pharmaceutical Network, Odhiambo makes the case for structured, context-sensitive interventions that shore up regulatory systems, local manufacturing, supply chains and human capital. His analysis underscores that access to medicines is as much about robust systems as it is about production.

Resilience is another recurring theme. Our article on health resilience distils lessons from Ebola, HIV and COVID-19 into three interlinked pathways: social and behavioral resilience, institutional and systems resilience, and economic/industrial resilience. Each pathway carries specific policy implications ranging from community engagement and risk communication to supply chain diversification and fiscal preparedness culminating in consolidated recommendations for governments and development partners.

Digital infrastructure and health connectivity also feature. David Ojut Okello examines the public-health consequences of internet shutdowns, showing how disrupted connectivity undermines emergency response, continuity of care and access to health information. His practical recommendations aim to safeguard essential health services and ensure digital networks remain available in crises.

We also tackle everyday health choices. An evidence-based article on screen time outlines how excessive exposure affects toddlers' brain development, social skills and sleep, and offers balanced guidance for caregivers seeking to use technology without compromising healthy development.

Cervical cancer remains a pressing challenge across Africa. Taofik Oloruko-Oba reviews Kenya's National Cervical Cancer Elimination Action Plan 2026–2030, aligned with WHO's 90-70-90 targets. He highlights the need for sustained political commitment, innovative financing, and community engagement to overcome cultural barriers and low participation. With the right investments, cervical cancer can move from a leading cause of death to a largely preventable condition.

Youth mental health and substance abuse receive focused attention in Shummu-Ê-L Mulenga Bukata Chanda's report from Zambia. Describing the Sport for Mental Resilience model developed by MIK Health & Wellness, he argues for upstream, community-based prevention that keeps young people on healthy life trajectories rather than relying predominantly on treatment and crisis response. The model leverages routine sport engagement, simple psychosocial content and accountable referral systems—an evidence-aligned approach that produces measurable development returns and can be scaled with government, academic and donor partnerships.

Innovation and partnerships also bring tangible wins. We report on the Eurostars award to Picterus AS (Norway) and GOAL 3 (Netherlands)—a €1M grant to deploy new newborn jaundice screening technology where it is most needed. If scaled, this innovation could prevent severe jaundice complications in millions of newborns in low-resource settings.

An economic analysis published in Lancet Global Health shows the value of targeted investments: MMV's work on antimalarials delivered health benefits estimated at 13 times the investment between 2000 and 2023. This kind of return on investment should encourage funders to prioritize product development partnerships and long-term financing for health innovation.

Patrick Kadama explores how geopolitical shifts create both vulnerability and opportunity for Africa. He argues that the continent's place in the changing global health order will depend on institutional consolidation, fiscal credibility and coherent continental governance aligned with Agenda 2063.

Obijiofor Aginamgives us a narrative on global polycrisis, conflict, climate disasters, pandemics, inequality, digital dividesannd how all this undermines SDGs in Africa. He describes how UNESCO urges reimagined education promoting peace, health, sustainability, global citizenship, empathy, digital ethics and lifelong learning. Integrating education and health as social determinants can build resilient, inclusive societies and advance Agenda 2030 through policy, community, and international cooperation.

As always, this issue includes our Medicine Digest, quiz, news updates and advertisements. Africa Health Journal remains an open-access, web-based resource (www.africa-health.com) updated daily and engaging readers on social media. We invite readers and partners to support both print and digital editions as we work together toward stronger, prevention-oriented health systems for Africa.

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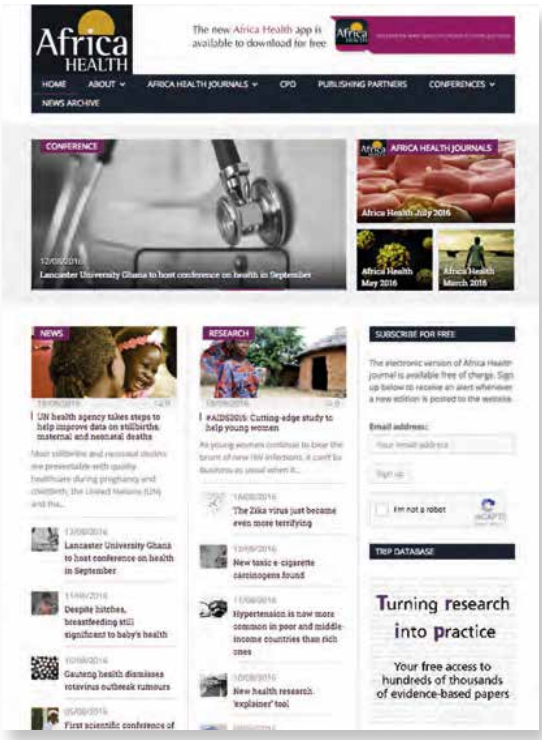
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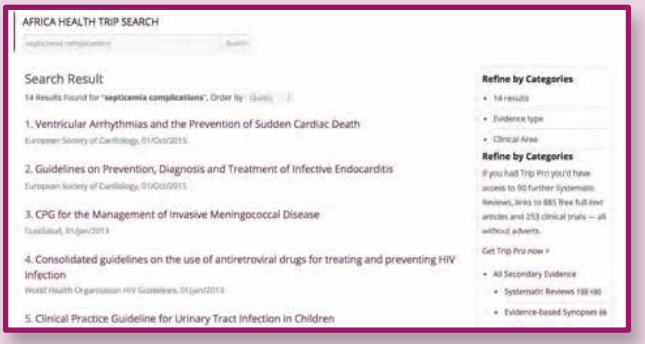
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