From Conferences to Action: Strengthening Africa's Health Systems



This issue of Africa Health Journal comes at a time when health systems across Africa face complex, interconnected challenges. Five conferences reported in this edition highlight a shared priority: developing a competent, responsive and resilient health workforce. Discussions on education, recruitment, deployment, retention, migration, research, technology and community engagement show that strengthening health systems requires more than training professionals; it demands coordinated leadership, effective policies, investment and collaboration.

An opinion marking Uganda's 64 years of independence acknowledges health gains and unfinished business across Africa. It considers lessons from other nations that gained independence from Western powers and calls on African health professionals and other technocrats to use their knowledge and influence to accelerate health transformation.

The second annual Consortium of Medical Schools–Africa (COMS-A) conference, MedEdAfrica 2026, held in Ethiopia from 6–8 July, moved the conversation from establishing a continental network towards implementing a shared agenda for medical education and workforce transformation. Discussions covered preparing the workforce for uncertainty, using technology and artificial intelligence (AI) in health professions education, harmonising standards, improving quality and strengthening partnerships. The challenge is to translate these priorities into practical changes in curricula, teaching, assessment and workforce preparation.

The Network: Towards Unity for Health (TUFH) 2026 Conference, held in Manila, Philippines, from 4–7 August, reinforced collective action and community co-creation as essential to health equity. The Bayanihan Declaration and Call to Action offers a framework for moving from dialogue to action. Its message resonates in Africa, where communities must help shape services that meet local needs. Sustainable improvement depends on listening to people and involving them in decisions affecting their health.

The 16th East, Central and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC) Best Practices Forum and 32nd Directors Joint Consultative Committee Meeting, held in Manzini, Eswatini, from 5–7 August, enabled participants to exchange experience and showcase health systems innovations. Discussions emphasised collaboration across institutions and sectors. Regional partnerships and sharing effective practices strengthen preparedness and responses to emerging threats, allowing countries to learn from one another instead of tackling similar challenges in isolation.

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Uganda hosted the ninth annual conference of the African Forum for Research and Education in Health (AFREhealth) at Speke Resort Munyonyo, Kampala, from 24–26 August 2026. Under the theme "From Innovation to Impact: Strengthening Health Education, Research, and Service Delivery for a Resilient Africa," discussions addressed people-centred systems, translating research into practice, workforce development beyond curricula and programmes, digital transformation, AI and collective leadership. The conference marked a transition in leadership. The next annual conference will be held in Botswana from 3–5 August 2027. African-led networks must ensure innovation and research produce measurable improvements in services and outcomes.

The Fourth Annual Maseno University and Northwestern University Health Professions Education Conference, held in Kisumu, Kenya, in April 2026, focused on building educators' capacity. Participants explored generative AI in clinical care and education, ethical implementation, educational scholarship and faculty development. As AI's influence grows, institutions must ensure it improves learning and practice while protecting privacy, promoting fairness and maintaining professional accountability.

Beyond conference reports, this issue addresses urgent public health and professional concerns. An article on Ebola examines challenges in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda's response, underscoring preparedness, coordination and timely action. "Networking and Collaboration in Health Sciences: Connecting Locally, Leading Globally" explores the skills and relationships needed to build meaningful professional networks, particularly for early-career professionals.

Three clinical articles address hepatitis B in maternal health, immune profiling and the global shortage of dermatologists. The hepatitis B article calls for routine antenatal screening, accessible testing, effective linkage to care and timely newborn protection, reinforcing prevention, early diagnosis and continuity of care. Gilbert Elvis Oloo's personal essay explores anxiety, loneliness and unemployment, presenting physical education as a community lifeline. Together, these contributions remind us that health encompasses physical, psychological and social well-being.

As always, this issue includes our Medicine Digest, quizzes, news updates and advertisements. Africa Health Journal remains an open-access, web-based resource (www.africa-health.com) updated daily and engages 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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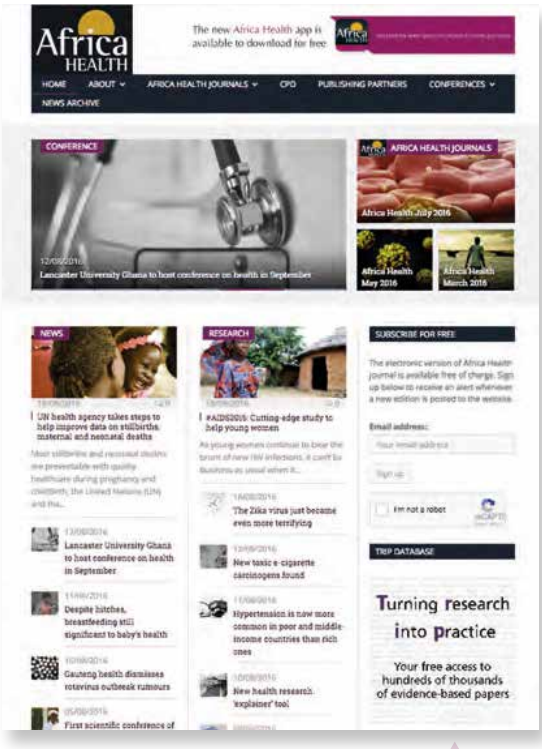
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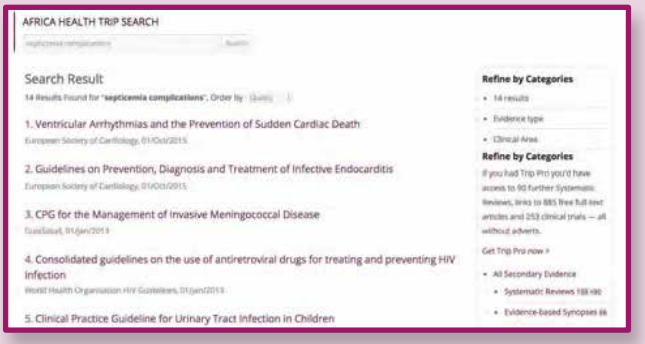
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