THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY



ANNUAL EARLY CAREER HEALTH RESEARCHERS' CONFERENCE

From Evidence to Impact: Driving Innovation and Health System Strengthening in Africa

November 20 - 21, 2026

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MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN, MEDICAL COLLEGE, EAST AFRICA

It is my pleasure and honour, on behalf of the **Aga Khan University Medical College, East Africa**, to extend a warm welcome to all participants of the **2026 Early Career Health Researchers Conference**. The conference offers an invaluable platform for emerging researchers and experienced professionals to explore how research can drive meaningful change in Africa's health systems.

This year's conference holds special significance as we celebrate ten years of empowering young researchers through research and mentorship. Over the past decade, this platform has nurtured a growing community of researchers, many of whom are now leading research and mentoring others across the region.

Under the theme, *"From Evidence to Impact: Driving Innovation and Health System Strengthening in Africa,"* the conference will highlight the critical role of research, innovation, and collaboration in addressing Africa's evolving health challenges and building more resilient, equitable and responsive health systems.

Across Africa, our health systems face significant challenges, including unequal access to healthcare, shortages of health professionals, limited resources, emerging diseases and the effects of climate change. Research provides us with valuable evidence to understand these emerging health challenges. However, evidence alone is not enough; we must translate it into policies, innovations and interventions that improve healthcare delivery and outcomes.

Over the course of this conference, we will explore three focus areas, each addressing a different stage of this journey from evidence to impact. First, translating research evidence into policy and practice. This focus area will explore how African-led research can inform public health policies, shape healthcare delivery and address the continent's most pressing health challenges, and how practical, evidence-based solutions can respond to our local realities, including the burden of infectious and non-communicable diseases, gaps in healthcare access and disparities in health outcomes.



Second, driving innovation and strengthening health systems through digital health, artificial intelligence and emerging technologies. We will examine how digital technologies, artificial intelligence, telemedicine and locally driven innovations can strengthen Africa's health systems, from expanding access to healthcare in underserved and remote communities and improving disease surveillance and diagnosis, to supporting healthcare workers and enhancing the efficiency of health service delivery.

Third, advancing equitable, people-centred healthcare through collaboration. We will explore how we can positively engage communities by addressing health inequalities, strengthening research capacity and fostering partnerships among governments, academic institutions, the public and private sectors, and development partners to scale up impactful solutions across Africa.

For our early-career researchers, this conference provides you with an opportunity to share your work, learn from experienced researchers, receive mentorship, build professional networks and explore new collaborations.

Lukoye Atwoli, MBS, MBChB, MMed Psych, PhD, IFAPA
The Jena and Hasanali Ajanee Endowed Chair in Medicine
Deputy Director, Brain and Mind Institute
Professor and Dean, Medical College East Africa

MESSAGE FROM THE ASSOCIATE DEAN – RESEARCH

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Aga Khan University Early Career Health Researchers' Conference 2026, taking place on November 20–21, 2026, at the Trademark Hotel, Village Market, Nairobi, Kenya.

This annual conference provides an important platform for emerging health researchers from Kenya and across the region to showcase their research, exchange ideas, build professional networks, and engage with experienced scientific leaders through mentorship and knowledge sharing. It reflects Aga Khan University's commitment to nurturing the next generation of health research leaders and strengthening the research ecosystem in Africa.

The theme for this year's conference, *"From Evidence to Impact: Driving Innovation and Health System Strengthening in Africa,"* speaks to the critical role of research in addressing the continent's evolving health challenges. As we continue to confront complex and interconnected health priorities, there is an increasing need to translate scientific evidence into innovative solutions, effective policies, and sustainable improvements in health systems. This calls for researchers who are not only committed to generating rigorous evidence but are also equipped to ensure that their work makes a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals and communities.

The conference offers an opportunity for early career researchers to share their discoveries, learn from one another, receive guidance from established researchers, and explore opportunities for collaboration. I particularly encourage our young researchers to embrace this opportunity to ask bold questions, challenge existing approaches, and develop research partnerships that will contribute to advancing health and wellbeing across Africa.

I also wish to acknowledge the conference steering committee, organizing team, invited speakers, mentors, partners, and all participants whose dedication and contributions have made this gathering possible. Your collective commitment to supporting early career researchers is invaluable to the future of health research in our region.



As the Associate Dean of Research, I am confident that this conference will inspire new ideas, foster meaningful collaborations, and strengthen our collective resolve to translate evidence into action.

I wish you all engaging discussions, fruitful interactions, and a rewarding conference. Welcome to the Aga Khan University Early Career Health Researchers' Conference 2026!

Prof. Anthony Ngugi
Associate Dean of Research
Aga Khan University

Message from Dean, School of Nursing and Midwifery, East Africa, The Aga Khan University,

Dear Colleagues, Guests, and Esteemed Early-Career Health Researchers, It is my great pleasure and honour to welcome you to the 10th Annual Early-Career Health Researchers' Conference, under the theme *"From Evidence to Impact: Driving Innovation and Health System Strengthening in Africa."*

As we mark the tenth edition of this important platform, the theme is both timely and deeply relevant to the future of health and healthcare in Africa. Across the continent, we are generating an expanding body of evidence to understand our most pressing health challenges. Yet, the measure of research is not only in what we discover, but in how effectively that knowledge is translated into better policies, improved practice, stronger health systems, and healthier communities.



Africa's health landscape is complex and evolving, shaped by the continuing burden of infectious and non-communicable diseases, maternal and child health challenges, mental health needs, health workforce constraints, inequities in access to quality care, and emerging threats such as climate change and pandemics. At the same time, advances in artificial intelligence, digital health, and data science are creating new opportunities to rethink how health services are designed and delivered.

The challenge before us, therefore, is not simply to generate more evidence, but to move evidence into action. At the Aga Khan University, School of Nursing and Midwifery, East Africa (SONAM-EA), our strategic commitment to *Advancing Knowledge through Research for Innovation, Practice, and Policy* reflects this imperative. We recognise that research has its greatest value when it responds to real-world needs and when its findings can be translated into solutions that are relevant, feasible, scalable, and sustainable. This requires research that is scientifically rigorous while remaining grounded in the lived realities of patients, families, health workers, communities, and health systems.

As nurses and midwives, we occupy a particularly important position in this endeavour. Our proximity to individuals, families, communities, and frontline health services provides us with a unique understanding of where health systems succeed, where they fall short, and where opportunities for transformation exist. We are therefore not only consumers of evidence but also generators, translators, implementers, and advocates of evidence. Our responsibility is to ensure that the knowledge emerging from our research reaches the point where it can improve care, inform decisions, strengthen systems, and ultimately change lives. However, translating evidence into impact cannot be achieved by one discipline or institution working in isolation. The complexity of Africa's health challenges demands multidisciplinary, multisectoral, and transnational collaboration. We must bring together nursing and midwifery, medicine, public health, epidemiology, biostatistics,

data science, engineering, social sciences, economics, policy, and implementation science, alongside the expertise of communities, industry, governments, and development partners.

This is particularly important as we embrace digital health and artificial intelligence. Technology offers tremendous potential to expand access, improve clinical decision-making, strengthen health information systems, personalise care, and make health services more responsive. Yet innovation must never become an end in itself. The true test of innovation is whether it addresses a meaningful problem, improves outcomes, advances equity, and can be responsibly adopted and sustained within real health systems. Our innovations must therefore be human-centred, ethically grounded, contextually appropriate, and responsive to the needs of the populations we serve. The five thematic tracks of this conference provide an important pathway for this conversation — from translating research into policy and practice, to harnessing digital health and AI, building resilient health systems, advancing equity and people-centred care, and strengthening partnerships and regional collaboration.

To our early-career researchers, this conference is particularly you. You represent the next generation of scientists, scholars, practitioners, and health leaders who will shape Africa's research and health systems agenda. I encourage you to look beyond presenting your findings and ask yourself: What problem does my evidence help us solve? Who needs to act on it? And what will it take to move it into practice?

Use this platform to seek mentorship, challenge established thinking, build interdisciplinary relationships, identify collaborators, and develop partnerships that extend beyond this conference. Be courageous in asking difficult questions, rigorous in generating evidence, and intentional in pursuing impact. As we celebrate this tenth anniversary, may we renew our collective commitment to building a research ecosystem in Africa that does more than produce knowledge, one that converts knowledge into action and action into measurable improvements in health and health systems.

Let us move forward with a shared conviction, evidence matters most when it changes lives. I warmly welcome you to the 10th Annual Early-Career Health Researchers' Conference and wish you meaningful dialogue, productive collaborations, and a truly impactful conference.

Thank you.

Eunice Ndirangu-Mugo
Professor and Dean,
School of Nursing and Midwifery, East Africa
Aga Khan University.



DAY 1

Friday 20th November 2026

Master of Ceremony
Winnie Munene
Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya

07.00 AM	**Arrival and Registration of AECHR conference delegates** Ms. Mary Mutua; Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya
08.15 AM	**Welcome Remarks and Housekeeping** Prof. Anthony Ngugi; Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya
08.20 AM	**Introductory Remarks** Prof. Lukoye Atwoli; Dean, Medical College, East Africa, Aga Khan University, Kenya
08.30 AM	**Session One: Innovations and Emerging Technologies** Moderator: Prof. Rodney Adam, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya **Concordance Between an Artificial Intelligence Retrieval-Augmented Generation System and Specialist Neurologists in the Management of Chronic Migraine.** Aditi Vakil, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya **Machine Learning Models to Predict Low Birth Weight in the Kenyan Coast** Daisy Chelangat, Institute of Human Development, Aga Khan University, Kenya **Assessing Africa's Emerging Advanced Therapeutics Ecosystem: Application of The Gene Therapy Readiness Assessment Tool (GRT-RAT).** David Adino, Gertrude's Children's Hospital, Kenya **Beyond The Hype: What Does Evidence Tell Us About AI Chatbots in Pre-Clinical Medical Education?** Cynthia Wandabwa, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya **Strengthening Epidemic Control Policies through the Evaluation of Digital Disease Surveillance in Al Qadarif State's Complex Emergency Settings.** Mohamed Talib, Africa CDC / Zambia National Public Health Institute (ZNPHI), Lusaka, Zambia **A Digital Transformation Framework for Public Institutions, A Case Study of Maternal and Child Health Records in Kisumu County, Kenya.** Alfonce Yano, Aga Khan University Hospital Nairobi, Kenya
09.30 AM	**Question & Answer Session**
09.45 AM	**Health Break**

10.15 AM	**Session Two: Innovations and Emerging Technologies** Moderator: Dr. Muthoni Mwangi, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya **Large Language Models as Adjuncts in Histopathology Education: A Cross-Sectional Pilot Study.** Wayne Ambunya, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya **Ubuntu: A paradoxical lens on shared Intelligence through AI-mediated Mental Health Support among Kenyan Public-University students.** Ivy Nyaboke, Finding Me Community, Nairobi, Kenya **Thematic Area: Health Systems Strengthening & Health Equity** **Family Satisfaction with Critical Care Services in A Tertiary Teaching Hospital in Nairobi, Kenya.** Ahmed Ali, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya **Measuring Progress Towards SDG 3.1 and 3.2 Targets; The Impact of Maternal and Neonatal Health Policies in Ghana.** Benjamin Frimpong, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana **Institutionalization Of Subnational Tailoring for Malaria Control in Tanzania: Impact and Challenges.** Elijah Lumwago, Ifakara Health Institute, Tanzania **The knowledge–practice gap in Parkinson's disease care in Kenya: healthcare workers' perspectives.** Millicent Parsimei, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya **Clinical characteristics of patients undergoing Antinuclear Antibody (ANA) testing at a tertiary teaching hospital in Kenya.** Antony Kimani, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya **Genetic Markers of Resistance to Resistance to Macrolides and Fluoroquinolones in Mycoplasma Genitalium from patients tested for sexually transmitted infections in Kenya.** Tahera Khatau, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya
11.35 AM	**Question & Answer Session**
11.50 AM	**Group Photo**
12.00 PM	**Session Three: Poster Gallery and Networking** (Poster Presentations Session A and Session B) Moderator: Juliet Makanga, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya
1.00 PM	**Lunch and Networking**

2.00 PM	**Welcome the Keynote Speaker** Prof. Anthony Ngugi; Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya
2.05 PM	**Keynote address 1** Dr Duncan Shikuku, Technical Specialist at UNFPA
2.35 PM	**Question & Answer session**
2.45 PM	**Session Four: Health Systems, Equity and Research** Moderator: Dr. Moses Mutua, School of Nursing and Midwifery (SONAM), Aga Khan University, Kenya **Assessment Of Interprofessional Relationships Among Health Professions Education Students: An Integrative Review.** Shirleen Muthoni, School of Nursing and Midwifery (SONAM) Aga Khan University, Kenya **Strengthening Health Systems Through School Feeding Programmes: A Systematic Review of Evidence on Adolescent Girls' Health Outcomes in Kenya.** John Vonza - Women and Girls Empowerment Initiative, Kitui, Kenya **Epidemic Preparedness and Response Capacity among Health Care Workers in Busia, Kenya.** Joseph Mukamba, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria **Designed with and Accepted by Adolescent Girls: Human-Centred Design for Overcoming Gendered Barriers to SRH in Northern Nigeria.** Yemilo Bello, Society for Family Health, Kaduna, Nigeria **Benchmarking Infection Prevention and Control in Tertiary Care Hospitals of Mogadishu: Insights from the WHO infection prevention and control assessment framework (IPCAF).** Moses Afolayan, Lagos State Ministry of Health, Nigeria **Governance And Management of Health Specialists in Kenya** Elizabeth Gitau, Strathmore University, Kenya
3:45 PM	**Question & Answer session**
4.00 PM	**Sponsor Remarks: ThermoFisher Scientific**

4.05 PM	**Session Five: Noncommunicable Disease Prevention** Moderator: Dr. Nyagwegwe Wango, Institute for Education Development, Aga Khan University, Tanzania **Juvenile Dermatomyositis in a Tertiary Pediatric Rheumatology Service in Nairobi, Kenya: A Ten-Year Descriptive Case Series.** Daniel Deng, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya **Enhancing Access to Maggot Debridement Therapy through Cost-Effective Production of Lucilia Sericata Larvae.** Kipkirui Billy, Biotechnology Research Institute – Kenya Agricultural Livestock Research Organization, Kenya **Parkinson's Disease Healthcare Challenges in Kenya: Patient Experiences on the Issues of Treatment Accessibility, Affordability and Continuity of Care.** Martha Pambo, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya
4.35 PM	**Question & Answer session**
4.45 PM	**Poster Gallery (Session A, Session B, Session C, Session D)** Moderator: Dr. Beda Olabu, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya
5.30 PM	**Health Break & Networking** Delegates leave at their own pleasure



DAY 2

Saturday 21st November 2026

Master of Ceremony
Winnie Munene
Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya

7.00 AM	**Arrival and Registration of AECHR conference delegates** Ms. Mary Mutua; Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya
8.15 AM	**Welcome Remarks** Prof. Shahin Sayed; Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya
8.20 AM	**Introductory Remarks** Prof. Eunice Ndirangu; Dean, School of Nursing and Midwifery, East Africa, Aga Khan University
8.30 AM	**Session Five: Health Systems, Equity, and Research** Moderator: Dr. Lucy Mwangi, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya **Supporting Those Who Care: Strengthening Maternal Health Services Through Better Support for Nurse/Midwives Providing Stillbirth and Bereavement Care at a National Referral Hospital in Kenya.** Ireri Fundi, Our Lady of the Assumption Medical Training College, Langata, Kenya **A Comparative End-User Survey to Assess Bed Net Use Following Mass Distribution in Fodome, Ghana.** Oscar Barnabas Kwame, National Malaria Elimination Programme, Ghana **The Economics Of Sustaining HIV Gains Towards The 95–95–95 UNAIDS Targets in a Shifting Funding Landscape in Kenya.** David Olpengs, Kemri Wellcome Trust, Kilifi, Kenya **Rashid Anticipation effect in Pakistani breast cancer families with or without BRCA1/2 pathogenic variants.** Muhammad Usman, Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre, Lahore, Pakistan **Prevalence and Factors Associated with Diabetes Screening Uptake among Adults in Zambia: Evidence from the 2024 Zambia Demographic and Health Survey.** Norah Okombo, Kuza Mentorship Program, Nairobi, Kenya **HIV Drug Resistance Among Viraemic Adults Living with HIV In Uganda: A Nationally Representative Population Health Survey.** Morrish Obol Okello, The Aids Support Organisation, Uganda
9.30 AM	**Question & Answer Session**
9.50 AM	**Health Break**

10.00 AM	**Session Six: Poster Gallery and Networking (Poster Presentations Session C & D)** Moderator: Dr. Juliet Makanga, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya
10.35 AM	**Session Seven: Mental health, Quality healthcare and patient safety** Moderator: Dr. Rose Ndumia, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya **Assessing the Impact of Postpartum Depression on Child Nutrition Among Young Mothers in Nairobi's Informal Settlements.** Mohamed Onyango, Aga Khan Hospital, Kisumu, Kenya **Silent Struggles: Loneliness and Its Association with Depression and Anxiety Among Medical Residents in Kenya.** Punam Raval, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya **Ubuntu as Counternarrative: How Peer Dialogue Reshapes the Language of Mental Health in African Universities.** Wangui Maina, Finding Me Community, Nairobi, Kenya **Prevalence and associated factors of intimate partner violence among reproductive women in Teso South sub-county, Busia County, Kenya.** Joel Wanzala, Busia, Kenya **Culturally and structurally embedded pathways to youth self-harm in Rwanda: perspectives from young people, parents, and healthcare providers.** Yves Gashugi, University of Global Health Equity, Kigali, Rwanda **Strengthening Data Systems and Use for Infectious Outbreak Preparedness in Uganda.** Ildephonse Nizeyimana, Moi University, Kenya
11.20 AM	**Poster Gallery (session C and session D)** Moderator: Dr. Juliet Makanga, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya
12.00 PM	**Remarks by Aga Khan University Hospital, Nairobi** CEO Rashid Khalani
12.30 PM	**Thriving Amid Change: Building a Resilient Careers as a young researcher** Dr. Beverly Cheserem, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya
1.00 PM	**Lunch**

2.00 PM	**Keynote address** Professor Simiat Elias
2.35 PM	**Question & Answer session** Prof. Simiat Elias, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya
3.00: PM	**Judges Feedback & Awards Presentations** Oral Presentations • Runner-ups • Best Presenter Poster Presentations • Runner-ups • Best Presenter
4:00 PM	**Vote of thanks and Closing remarks** Dr. Lucy Mwangi Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya AECHR Conference Evaluation Survey
4.30PM	**Networking Tea and Snacks** Delegates leave at their own pleasure



POSTER GALLERY – DAY ONE, SESSION A

1. **Undiagnosed HIV Among Men in Uganda: Prevalence, Correlates, and Missed Testing Opportunities.**
   Morrish Obol Okello, The AIDS Support Organisation, Uganda

2. **Implementation Outcomes and Preliminary Effectiveness of a Peer-Led HIV Self-Testing Model for Adolescent Girls and Young Women in Rural Northern Uganda.**
   Morrish Obol Okello, The AIDS Support Organisation, Uganda

3. **AI-driven digital triage for mental health, violence, and HIV risk among female sex workers in Calabar, Nigeria: a cross-sectional acceptability and feasibility study.**
   Lydia Efobi, Person-centered HIV Research Team (PeCHIVReT), Enugu, Nigeria

4. **Perception of condom usage among Kamuzu University of Health Sciences students, Blantyre Campus.**
   Elizer Kanyika, Zingwangwa Health Centre, Blantyre, Malawi

5. **Early Clinical predictors of neurological worsening in stroke patients at Regional Hospital Bamenda.**
   Mbincho Joseph Forbah, University of Bamenda, Cameroon

6. **Reducing the Weight of Care: Medication Access as a Pathway to Strengthening Parkinson's Disease Care in Kenya.**
   Brenda Mghendi, Aga Khan & Daystar University, Kenya

POSTER GALLERY – DAY ONE, SESSION B

7. **Assessing the Effectiveness of Integrating a Peer Educators Program in Enhancing HIV Services Uptake among students at Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences, Blantyre, Malawi.**
   Billy Khembo, Center for Community Health, Research and Youth Development (CHERYOD), Malawi

8. **Magnitude, Causes, and Factors Associated with Mortality Among People with Epilepsy in Rural Kenya.**
   Romeo Ngesa, Kemri Wellcome Trust Research Program, Kilifi, Kenya

9. **Operationalizing One Health in Africa-Workforce Systems Reform, Community-Linked Implementation, and Digital Knowledge Translation.**
   Bolanle Akanbi-Hakeem, University of Global Health Equity (UGHE), Rwanda

10. **National and subnational burden of Ischaemic stroke in Kenya from centralization to devolution, 1990–2023, with forecasts to 2033: an analysis for Global Burden Disease Study 2023.**
    Irene Njoka, Technical University of Kenya/ Jinzhou Medical University, Nairobi, Kenya

11. **In-Silico Modeling of D29 Mycobacteriophage Protein Complexes Against Mycobacterium leprae.**
    Lewis Ngalla, Kenya Institute of Primate Research, Kenya

12. **Spatio-Temporal Trends in Fatal Self-Harm in Kenya, 1980-2021.**
    Sharon Chepkemoi, Institute of Human Development, Aga Khan University, Kenya

POSTER GALLERY – DAY TWO, SESSION C

1. **Determinants of Healthcare Out-of-Pocket Expenditures in Turkana County of Kenya.**
   David Olpengs, Kemri Wellcome Trust, Kilifi, Kenya

2. **Financial Toxicity and Financial Distress Among Women Receiving Breast Cancer Treatment in Kenya: Interim Findings from the Equity Perspective.**
   Amina Kidee, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya

3. **Building Climate-Resilient Health Systems: A Pathway to Health Equity in Nigeria.**
   Rashidah Abdul Quadri, ATO-ClimatEducate, Lagos, Nigeria

4. **Characterizing $PM_{2.5}$ Exposure in a School Environment: Evidence from Continuous Air Quality Monitoring at Aga Khan Academy, Nairobi.**
   Wandji Danube Kirt Ngongang, Stockholm Environment Institute, Nairobi, Kenya

5. **Climate-Nutrition Intelligence for Primary Health Care (C-NIPH): A Proposed Predictive Model for Anticipating and Preventing Climate-Related Malnutrition Risks.**
   Eric Kirimi, Centre for Inclusive Climate Change Adaptation for a Sustainable Africa, Meru, Kenya

6. **Performance-Based Financing and Healthcare Quality in Cameroon: Evidence on Quality, Patient Satisfaction and Sustainability.**
   Chin Erick Ngehdzeka, Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, University of Yaoundé, Cameroon

7. **Hacksessible: An interprofessional Education Challenge at the Centre for Innovation in Medical Education, Aga Khan University.**
   Anderson Okangi, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya

POSTER GALLERY – DAY TWO, SESSION D

8. **Digital Health Information Seeking Behavior Among Caregivers of Children in Meru: A Mixed Methods Cross-Sectional Study.**
   Esther Wambui, Kenya Methodist University, Kenya

9. **Assessing the Effects of Community-Based Interventions in Enhancing Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and Psychological Well-Being of Adolescent Girls in Kibera Slums, Nairobi.**
   Ezekiel Kimondiu, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya

10. **Determinants of healthcare-seeking behaviour among men aged 15 to 59 years old in South Africa.**
    Sihlosokuhle Zwane, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

11. **By Chance or By Choice? A Situation Report on High Neonatal Mortality in Rural Kenya.**
    Wanjiku Kamau and Bemnet Abiy, Medical College, Aga Khan University, Kenya

12. **Practices and challenges of health care providers towards Antimicrobial Stewardship in Africa: A systematic review and meta-analysis.**
    Abrham Habteyes, Ethiopian Defense University, Ethiopia

13. **Road to Eliminating Out-of-Pocket Payment: Examining the challenges and strategic roles of rural healthcare providers at the point-of-care.**
    Julius Cudjoe, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Prof. Simiat Elias

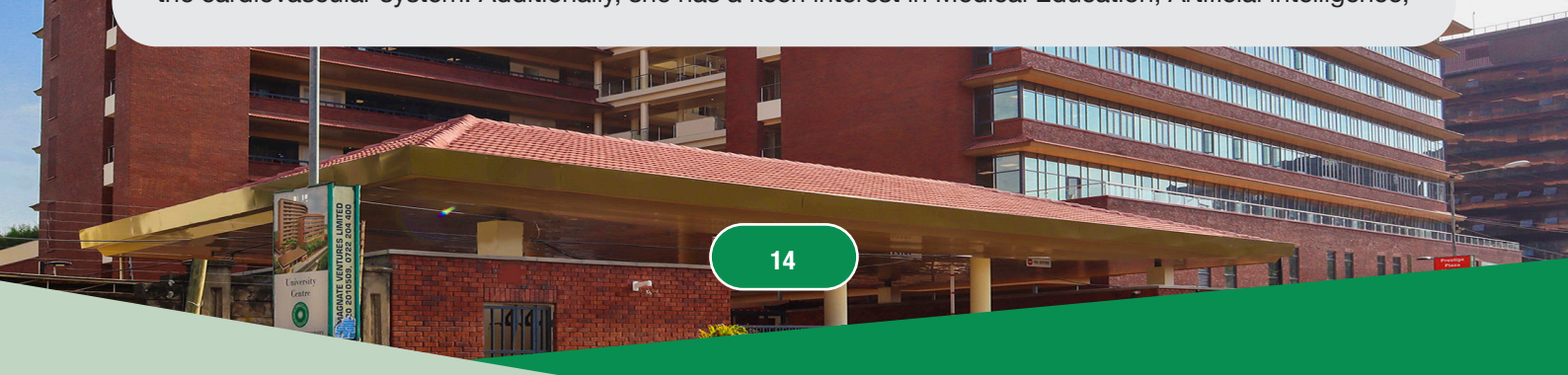
Professor Simiat Elias is the Founding Chair of Biomedical Sciences and Interim Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education (UGME) at The Aga Khan University Medical College, East Africa. She is a highly accomplished academic with extensive experience in the field of Physiology and Medical Education. She holds a BSc (Hons), MSc in Physiology from the University of Lagos, Nigeria. Thereafter, she obtained an MBChB degree from Obafemi Awolowo University, and an MPH from Lagos State University. She later received her PhD in Physiology from the University of Lagos, Nigeria.

As the Founding Chair of Biomedical Sciences, Prof. Elias established the foundational academic structures critical to the successful launch of the new MBChB programme. Following her appointment as Interim Associate Dean FOR UGME in June, she has continued to steer the programme through a pivotal phase, successfully guiding its inaugural cohort into their first clinical rotation.

Prior to joining AKU in March 2023, Professor Elias held various positions at Lagos State University College of Medicine, starting as a Lecturer II in February 2000 and eventually rising to the rank of full Professor in October 2020. She served as Acting Head of her department at different times and full Chair of the Department from October 2020 till September 2021. As Director of Centre for General Nigerian Studies (CGNS), she played a pivotal role in overseeing the comprehensive training of all Lagos State University (LASU) undergraduate students in the four GNS courses approved by the Nigerian Universities Commission. She later developed and obtained LASU Senate approval for a fifth GNS course before leaving the university in February 2023.

Professor Elias was the Inaugural Vice President of the Society for Medical Physiology of Nigeria (SMPN) and she served as the Founding Editor-in-Chief of SMPN's peer-reviewed journal, Annals of Translational Physiology. She was the Editor-in-Chief of LASU Journal of Biomedical Sciences from 2020 to 2022.

With more than 26 years of experience in academia, Professor Elias has played a pivotal role in training Medical and Dental students, Nursing students, and other allied professionals. She has supervised numerous undergraduate and postgraduate students in the field of Physiology. Her primary research focus lies in the determinants and course of Salt-sensitive hypertension and investigating the impact of various diseases on the cardiovascular system. Additionally, she has a keen interest in Medical Education, Artificial intelligence,

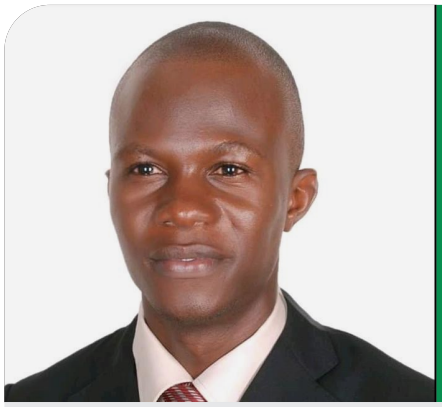


and the Ethics of Biomedical Research.

Prof. Elias is a member of numerous premier societies, including the Physiological Society of Nigeria (PSN), Medical Women Association of Nigeria (MWAN), The Physiological Society (TPS) of UK/ROI; the American Physiological Society (APS), African Association of Physiological Sciences (AAPS), International Association of Medical Science Educators (IAMSE) and East African Association of Physiological Sciences (EASPS). From 2022 to 2025, she co-chaired the Board of General Assembly for the International Union of Physiological Sciences (IUPS), representing over 60 Physiological societies worldwide. Today, she chairs the IUPS Mentorship Committee, serves on the AAPS Council, and chairs the EASPS Medical Education Committee where she recently organized and delivered Africa's inaugural Physiology Olympiad in May this year.

Prof. Simiat Elias remains deeply committed to medical education, actively mentoring faculty and students at AKU and across her wider professional networks to foster academic and professional excellence.





Dr. Duncan Shikuku

Duncan Shikuku Bio Dr. Duncan Shikuku is a globally recognized Midwifery and Women's Health Specialist, technical specialist, and researcher with over a decade of experience in clinical practice, academia, and high-level maternal, newborn and child health programming. Currently serving as Technical Specialist – Midwifery at UNFPA Headquarters in Nairobi, he contributes to the strategic implementation, research, and global advocacy of UNFPA's flagship midwifery initiatives. Besides, his strategic portfolio advances global initiatives on emergency obstetric and newborn care (EmONC), maternal and perinatal deaths surveillance and response (MPDSR) and maternal health non-communicable diseases. He actively contributes technical expertise to the development and review of global standards, policies, and guidelines in midwifery and maternal-newborn health. Dr. Shikuku holds a PhD in Global Health from the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM, United Kingdom)—where he remains as an Honorary Academic—alongside a Master's in Midwifery and Women's Health from Makerere University (Uganda) and a BSc in Nursing from Moi University (Kenya). He is also an Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (United Kingdom). Prior to his headquarters appointment, he held key technical and leadership roles at LSTM (Senior Technical Officer), Save the Children International (Maternal and Newborn Health Officer), and the Global Network for Women's and Children's Health Research (Master Trainer and Cluster Coordinator), where he led large-scale capacity-building programs for midwives and other skilled health personnel; midwifery education curriculum reforms; maternity healthcare workers deployment and retention reforms; and digital health innovations to strengthen the competencies of health professionals globally. A prolific researcher and scholar, Dr. Shikuku's work continues to directly shape national and international policies on midwifery education and maternal mortality reduction. He co-designed the globally acclaimed Midwifery Educator Continuous Professional Development Programme, which won the LSTM 125 Years Contribution of the Year Award. He frequently authors high-impact scientific publications and contributes as an expert reviewer for top-tier global health journals. Driven by a commitment to equitable healthcare, Dr. Shikuku continues to champion midwifery integration as a primary engine for achieving universal health coverage and sustainable development goals.



JUDGES



Prof. Mutinda C. Kyama

Prof. Mutinda C. Kyama is a Biomedical Scientist - Clinical Cytologist, currently serving as the Dean, School of Biomedical Sciences, and an Associate Professor of Clinical Cytology in the Department of Medical Laboratory Sciences, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT). He has a Bachelor's degree in Biochemistry and Masters of Science in Clinical Cytology from the University of Nairobi, Kenya and a Master's degree in Medical Sciences a Magna Cum Laude and Doctor of Biomedical Sciences in Molecular and Cellular Mechanisms of Human Disease from the Katholieke University (KU) of Leuven, Belgium. He was a visiting postdoctoral fellow at the Laboratory of Experimental Gynaecology, University Hospital Gasthuisberg, KULeuven in 2011. He is also a recipient of the World Endometriosis Society Rodolphe Maheaux Travel award (2011), an international award given in recognition of outstanding research conducted by individuals who are young researchers in endometriosis. He was a visiting Scholar at the Faculty of Medicine, KU Leuven, Campus Gasthuisberg in 2023 as a recipient of the KULeuven Interfaculty Council for Global Development award that fit the Global Minds philosophy to stimulate the exchange of knowledge and innovative research. He has special research interest in the Clinical Cytology and understanding the molecular and cellular mechanisms involved in the pathogenesis of endometriosis, breast cancer, and gynaecologic malignancy, with over 120 scientific publications in internationally peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings, contributed a book and several book chapters. He was previously a member of European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology, cum member of the Special Interest Group in Endometriosis and Endometrium from 2003 to 2009, member of Belgium Society for Reproductive Medicine from 2003 to 2009, and a member of the World Endometriosis Society since 2008. Member of the Society for Clinical Cytologist Kenya from 2019 to date. His goal is to enhance the linkage between academia and industry through promoting research and development, technology transfer, artificial intelligence/ machine learning tools, in low resource settings.





Dr. Dunstan Achwoka

Dr. Dunstan Achwoka is a seasoned physician and public health leader with nearly two decades of expertise dedicated to advancing health equity, health systems strengthening, and infectious disease control. Currently, he serves as a Project Management Specialist (Public Health) at the U.S. Department of State, Kenya mission, where he provides strategic and technical leadership on HIV, maternal and child health, and polio portfolios to align foreign assistance with Kenya's national health priorities. Before joining the Department of State, Dr. Achwoka served as the Deputy Team Lead for the HIV Care and Treatment portfolio at USAID Kenya and East Africa, managing a $200 million portfolio. Throughout his career, he has been a driving force in program design, policy development, and large-scale implementation. His work has fundamentally shaped national guidelines and influenced the delivery of PEPFAR-funded programs, consistently bridging the gap between global strategy and frontline service delivery. Dr. Achwoka's academic background is anchored by a PhD in Tropical and Infectious Diseases from the University of Nairobi, an MSc in Global Health from Duke University, and a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery from Moi University. A dedicated mentor and educator, he is currently an adjunct lecturer at the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) and a 2025-2026 Kofi Annan Global Health Leadership Fellow with the Africa CDC. An accomplished researcher and published author, Dr. Achwoka has contributed significantly to the understanding of HIV and non-communicable diseases in Africa. He has received multiple U.S. Mission awards for innovation and leadership. Today, he remains committed to championing sustainable, country-led health solutions that improve outcomes for populations across the region.





Dr. George Ngondi Michuki

Dr. George Ngondi Michuki, a distinguished medical microbiologist and genomics expert in Kenya, is the Founder and CEO of The Africa Genomics Centre and Consultancy Company (TAGCC), specializing in genomics, bioinformatics, and biological software development. As a founder and director of Nextgen Molecular Lab, he spearheads molecular diagnostics, precision medicine services, and health software solutions. Dr. Ngondi's impactful work includes advising Kenya's National Multi-Agency Command Centre on COVID-19 and the Ministry of Health from 2020 to 2022. His career highlights encompass establishing Africa's first genomics platform at ILRI in 2009, where he utilized Next Generation Sequencing technologies for pathogen surveillance and discovery. Additionally, he is a member of the Biotechnology Research Program Committee at the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) and a member of the Precision Medicine Taskforce at the Ministry of Health, Kenya.

An accomplished academician, he has delivered lectures and training across various scientific disciplines at local and international levels. Dr. Ngondi's visionary leadership and entrepreneurial spirit have not only revolutionized the genomics landscape but also driven the creation of cutting-edge facilities and protocols, making him a proven innovator whose contributions promise significant advancements in healthcare, research, and technology.



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