

Sixth Edition Galien Forum Africa, Dakar, Senegal 3 - 7 October 2023

A Singo,^{1,2} BA, BA Hons; K Tshabalala,^{1,2} MB ChB, FCPHM, MMed; M Chisale-Mabotja,^{1,3} MB ChB, FCPHM, MMed; I Seck,⁴ MD, MScID, PhD

¹ Department of Public Health Medicine, University of Pretoria, South Africa

² Steve Biko Academic Hospital, Pretoria, South Africa

³ Tembisa Provincial Tertiary Hospital, Ekurhuleni, South Africa

⁴ Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, Sénégal

Corresponding author: A Singo (andani.singo@up.ac.za)

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Since 2009, the Galien Foundation has been organising a Scientific Forum in the USA alongside the Prix Galien International. The Galien Forum Africa was established to strengthen research and sustainable development by sharing experiences on major public health issues in 2018. It provides a platform for high-level scientific exchanges on issues of common interest, on the health priorities of our continent. It provides an opportunity to share lessons learned, challenges and perspectives. Annually, it brings together scientific experts in the fields of health, environment, finance and biotechnology, as well as eminent political and civil society figures, Nobel Prize winners and hundreds of graduating medical, pharmaceutical, dental and biotechnology students, selected from the best universities on the African continent.^[1]

The forum organised its first meeting in Dakar, Senegal in December 2018. This year, for the sixth time in a row, the Galien Forum took place from 3 - 7 October 2023, in Dakar. The central theme of the Forum was '*Non-communicable diseases: Africa in the fight!*' During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was revealed that people with non-communicable diseases (NCDs) were at an increased risk of contracting a severe form of COVID-19 or dying from the disease. This revelation led to profound changes in health systems, economies and societies. In many countries, it has undermined efforts to protect populations from NCDs. The Galien Forum Africa chose this year's theme to effectively address NCDs and associated major risk factors, to deliberate on the current situation in countries, and the progress made to date.

The Forum made a special effort to invite women, youth and students from a large number of academic institutions to attend the forum and participate in several sessions, especially focusing on women and youth.

The focus of the first two days was youth. Day one of the Forum focused on youth and deliberated on several issues, such as their training in leadership and artificial intelligence, health literacy and 'Innovations and Opportunities for Artificial Intelligence in the

treatment of Non-Communicable Diseases'. Day two of the forum focused on social and technological innovations, by conducting parallel sessions for the youth on 'Youth and Innovation in Combating Non-Communicable Diseases', 'Young innovators', and entrepreneurs and investors meeting. The second day ended with an award ceremony: *Young African Health Innovators Award: Africa rewards its young innovators*. These two days provided a fertile ground for discussions on NCDs and youth participation from various countries in Africa. This forum also assisted in breaking the barriers of nationalities, language, occupational and educational background, and the development of future collaborations in combating common challenges faced within the African continent.

Day 3 of the forum focused on women. It commenced with discussions on the roles of women in combating NCDs in Africa, addressing questions, such as 'How do we contract diabetes, heart disease, obesity, cancer, kidney failure, and respiratory failure?' or 'How do we become addicted?' and 'What are our responsibilities?' Parallel discussions unfolded under four sub-themes:

1. Women's leadership and NCDs in Africa.
2. Role of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and NCDs in Africa.
3. Gender and Equity and NCDs in Africa.
4. Reliable and affordable access to quality products and medicines to combat NCDs in Africa. The day ended with a workshop on Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) in Combating NCDs. Day three provided some interesting insights into NCD management and the responsibilities of addressing this pandemic in Africa.

Day 4 commenced with the grand opening ceremony featuring keynote speakers engaging in a panel discussion alongside the Prime Minister of the Republic of Senegal, the President of the Galien African Association, the President of the Galien Foundation and the Regional Director of the WHO AFRO. This was followed by

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parallel discussions on a multisectoral approach to NCD prevention, focusing on the current status of cardiovascular diseases, stroke and chronic kidney diseases, and exploring the associated challenges and prospects. The day concluded with the announcement of the 2023 Prix Galien Africa Ceremony. Day five, the final day, started with a continuation of the scientific forum with parallel discussions on the current challenges and futures of diabetic care, chronic respiratory diseases, improving mental health and addiction care and addressing the issue of nutrition in Africa. These last two days of the meeting provided better insights and evidence-based approaches to managing specific NCDs, such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic kidney diseases and mental health including substance use relevant to African countries.

The conference ended with a round table discussion among the deans of universities from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the possibilities of adapting university training to meet the health needs of the population.

The participants and speakers were from various African countries, including Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Niger,

Senegal, South Africa, Ghana, Togo, Tunisia and Uganda. Representatives from the USA and organisations, including the World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa were also present. Notwithstanding the limitations that many African countries face, during these deliberations, areas of excellence and best practices from the various African countries were highlighted. This created an environment for deliberation on opportunities for cross-pollination, collaborative research and training across the African continent to accelerate efforts in combating NCDs. The conference ended with a continued sense of commitment and vigour from all the stakeholders to take the work initiated in the Galien Forum and translate it to collaborative action in managing NCDs. *Africa in the fight!*

1. Galien Forum Africa. Background. 2023. <https://forumgalienafrique.com/en/background/> (accessed 20 December 2023).

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