

Bringing quality and safety to Africa's healthcare

Quality and patient safety in Africa - with lessons from Covid-19 - was a key theme for day one of the Africa Health Conference.



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The conference, which got underway on Monday, is an online event that brings Africa's healthcare industry together to discuss and explore innovative new thinking and solutions around Africa's healthcare challenges.

Bridging the quality improvement gap

A panel, facilitated by CEO of the Council for Health Service Accreditation of Southern Africa (COHSASA), Jacqui Stewart, discussed ways to bridge the quality improvement gap and find quick wins for driving safety and quality measures.

Speaking on the need for quality standards to be entrenched in policy, Stewart says that a sound safety standards and assessments methodology can build trust between stakeholders and pave the way for reliable nation-wide quality monitoring systems.

"Policy shifts towards equality, accountability, and quality improvement should be prioritised," she says.

Quality improvements a crucial tool

A compelling discussion titled *What is happening in Africa – An overview of interventions and strategies to bridge the quality improvement gap at the frontline in sub-Saharan Africa* was facilitated by Dr Ruthpearl Ng'ang'a, policy engagement and communications manager at the African Population and Health Research Centre.

Ng'ang'a expresses her conviction that healthcare quality improvements are the most crucial tool in ensuring the safety, capacity and resilience of Africa's systems' often highly-pressured frontline Healthcare workers (HCW).

She remarks that hospitals in Africa have partnered to share learnings during Covid-19, as care facilities were forced to rethink HCW deployment, as well as HCW safety. She cited some innovative strategies.

"Some hospitals set up text message-based response systems. One facility completely retooled patient flow, creating a new track for respiratory cases, and another separate track to protect patients who needed care but who did not present with Covid-19 symptoms", she says.

QA and QI

Dr Mary Adam, physician, paediatrician, and head of research at AIC Kijabe Maternal Newborn Community Health Centre in Nairobi, spoke about the relationship between Quality Assurance (QA), and Quality Improvement (QI).

"Achieving quality improvements at the frontline and upskilling frontline HCW with the skill-set and understanding to affect positive change takes passion and commitment," she says.

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