

Virtual Symposium: *Finding Joy in Healthcare in Africa*

Dates: 1st and 2nd September 2021



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‘Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, & that is an act of political warfare.’—Audre Lorde

As in other parts of the world, across the African continent, a variety of pathways to health and healing are available for those who fall ill or want to ensure wellbeing. The landscape of health and wellbeing is vast and caters to myriad experiences. However, dominant perceptions of healthcare in Africa portray it either in terms of failure, disrepair, chaos and disappointment, or as agentic creative refashioning under such circumstances. Little attention is paid, within scholarly research, to the *joy* that accompanies pursuing or achieving health and wellbeing.

The Southern and Eastern African Medical and Health Humanities network (SEAMHH), a regional network of [Medical and Health Humanities Africa](#) (MHHA) is hosting an interdisciplinary symposium: *‘Finding Joy in Healthcare in Africa’*. The symposium is the first of many engagements, which will be led by our partners, the [Malawi Medical Humanities Network](#) (MHHN) in collaboration with The Art of Health. This inaugural event is devoted to how *joy* is considered in the provision, rituals, practices, behaviour, and interventions that accompany healthcare. The symposium will focus on temporal perspectives—past, present and future—that engage how healthcare practitioners, health systems and people seeking healthcare in Africa approach issues of *joy, trust, confidence, or comfort* at individual, familial, community or national levels. The aim is to challenge the now-taken-for-granted idea that health and healthcare systems are sources of trauma and a site for saviourism. Instead, we encourage a critical and/or creative reconsideration of the dynamic concepts of care, wellbeing and health-seeking behaviour.

In this symposium, we invite artists, activists, health practitioners and academics to re-imagine health and healthcare in Africa. The symposium offers mixed formats and will include workshops, academic papers, discussion forums and two keynote addresses.

Please send your expression of interest for participation to findingjoyconference@gmail.com by **Wed. 4 August 2021**. The event will introduce key themes to be further explored in our forthcoming *‘Finding Joy’* research, which focuses on developing practical tools that aim to make the healthcare experience more positive across various health sectors.

SEAMHH is preparing a special issue on the theme, which we plan to submit to [British Medical Journal – Medical Humanities](#). We anticipate that the completed special edition will launch in June 2024.

Visit our website for more details on the programme & registration: <https://www.medicalandhealthhumanities.africa/>

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This event is hosted in collaboration with the following funders and partners:



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