

THE 1st AFRICAN NEUROSCIENCE & PSYCHIATRY SUMMIT 2023

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On 24 – 26 February 2023, Janssen South Africa Neuroscience hosted the 1st African Neuroscience & Psychiatry Hybrid Summit in Johannesburg in collaboration with the African Global Mental Health Institute (AGMHI).

THE AIM OF THIS AFRICAN NEUROSCIENCE & PSYCHIATRY SUMMIT WAS TO SHARE MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE, ENCOURAGE IMPACTFUL DISCUSSIONS AND DRIVE PROGRESSIVE CHANGE IN THE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN MENTAL HEALTH SPACE. THIS INCLUDED HIGHLIGHTING PERTINENT NEUROSCIENTIFIC ASPECTS RELATED TO VARIOUS PSYCHIATRIC CONDITIONS FOCUSED ON MOOD DISORDERS AND SCHIZOPHRENIA.

THE SUMMIT COVERED VARYING TOPICS RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH IN AFRICA:

Highlights from the opening day included a welcome from the President of South African Society of Psychiatrists (SASOP), Dr Sebolelo Seape, AGMHI (delivered by Prof. Bonga Chiliza) and a Janssen South Africa presentation delivered by the Country General Manager, Ahmed El Hofy. Dr David Henderson, guest speaker from the USA, presented a plenary session on "Understanding the role of metabolic syndrome in schizophrenia".

The second day's main highlight was the launch of the #breakingstigma campaign; Janssen South Africa's Neuroscience-led campaign in collaboration with the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) and the South African Society of Psychiatrists (SASOP), aimed at highlighting and creating awareness on the stigmas associated with mental health in South Africa. During this launch, two patients and a caregiver shared their stories about living with depression and the importance of seeking help, speaking up, and spreading the word in an effort to help end the stigma.

Day two also included plenary sessions covering novel therapies in treating and managing mood disorders specifically depression and a session with a focus on HIV and depression. A child psychiatry session highlighted the importance of child mental health with an Afrocentric approach, while ending the day on a high note about the Ethics and bioethics around novel Neuromodulatory treatments in managing treatment resistant depression (TRD).

The last day's plenary sessions covered various topics: Breaking the stigma associated with schizophrenia, Patient X-Files - A deep dive into treating and managing Schizophrenia in the South African landscape and Queering mental health: The ethics and biopolitics of an inclusive LGBT+ agenda.

This Summit welcomed mental health professionals from across the Sub-Saharan African region; such as Botswana, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, and Lesotho.

APPRECIATION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

- Prof Bonga Chiliza
- Prof Saeeda Paruk
- Dr Mvuyiso Talatala
- Dr Lihle Mgweba
- Dr Philip Opondo (Botswana)
- Dr Michele Durham (USA)

REFLECTIONS FROM SUMMIT ATTENDEES:

Dr Wisani Makhomisane (Psychiatrist, Limpopo) – "Firstly I would like to thank you and Janssen/AGMHI for a well organised summit. I attended physically and everything about the hotel and support staff was great.

All the topics were well thought through and well presented by industry leaders in their field. For me, what made this summit exceptional was that it was Africans discussing mental health in Africa. It said to

me that there is a space and room for us to support each other in all small corners of Africa.

The session that stood out to me was the child psychiatry session which highlighted some of the fundamentals around Autism spectrum disorders. I also particularly enjoyed the session on neuroethics, Dr Olivia and Dr Lihle had highlighted such important aspects around neuromodulatory treatment in psychiatry which I felt is something very important to highlight especially in a progressive treatment landscape in Africa.

Lastly, Sadiyah (Janssen MSL – Psychiatry), excuse the pun but you are the man. You took this summit as your new-born through all milestones, you were even running around with the microphone during the Q&A, and I can safely say your baby has fully achieved all her milestones.

Well done. Keep on excelling and through you, Janssen/AGMHI is becoming a household name. We look forward to the next Summit."

Dr Marcia Ntimani (Psychiatrist, Johannesburg South) – "Thank you so much to Janssen/AGMHI for the summit. It was well organised and very insightful. The pre-summit workshop was very helpful because as health professionals we use motivational interviewing a lot in substance use disorders. But the workshop has further highlighted for me that one can use these techniques with other disorders and for medication compliance.

Furthermore, the patient interviews done at the Summit was the highlight of the show, especially the lady who came with her son. Reality kicked in for me when he spoke about his experience of living with a depressed mom. Sometimes we don't realise the impact of mental illness on family members, and it was so insightful to get to hear their experiences and truly understand the caregiver's burden. This perspective will always remain with me as I treat and manage patients.

All the topics were nicely presented and I like the fact that it was short presentations that were straight to the point. The sessions were all informative and I definitely look forward to another Summit next year. Thank you for the hosting us and we appreciate that refreshments were always available."

QUOTE HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SUMMIT:

"Janssen South Africa is committed to providing unbiased medical education and content excellence in the field of neuroscience and psychiatry to healthcare professionals in South Africa. Through our valued collaboration with AGMHI, we aim to highlight our commitment to

providing medical excellence and transforming the landscape of mental health in Africa with the goal of improving patient outcomes." **Sadiyah Cassim, Medical Scientific Liaison (Psychiatry) at Janssen South Africa**

"Mental health remains one of the most important areas in public health. The stigma and discrimination attached to mental health diseases prevent many people from seeking treatment, leading to significant social and economic consequences. The #breakingstigma campaign is an opportunity for us to collaborate with key stakeholders to break down the stigma surrounding mental health and encourage individuals to prioritize their mental wellbeing. Unchecked, mental health can grow to become a major health risk amongst South Africans." **Moustafa Kamel, Medical Affairs Director at Janssen South Africa**

"One of the few positives about the COVID-19 pandemic is that it really unearthed how important mental health is. The problem with stigma is ignorance, attitude and discrimination, or behaviour against people with mental health. And that's what we should be targeting - the knowledge. The #breakingstigma campaign is a wonderful initiative to educate people about these mental health issues." **Prof. Bonga Chiliza Associate Professor/Chief Specialist and Head of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of KwaZulu-Natal & Co-Director of AGMHI**

"There has been a marked increase in mental health challenges amongst South Africans due to the significant amount of stress citizens live and work under. Economic, social, and family pressures are immense right now. It's important that people take the first step toward mental health." **Dr Sebolelo Seape, President at SASOP**

"Living with treatment resistant depression (TRD) is not easy and I think depression overall is misunderstood. The worst thing about living with it is the very deep dark hole that you go into; where you contemplate the worst things in life, for example, suicide or self-harm, and consequently hurting your family." **John Clay, a patient living with TRD**

"There is no shame in mental health. It can be overwhelming, however with support and treatment it is manageable." **Pearl Ndlovu, a patient living with depression**

"There cannot be enough emphasis on the risks of ignoring mental health, and it starts with dispelling stigmas that are associated with various conditions that many people suffer from. It is, in many ways, impacting more people than we realise, but the door should be open to allow people to come forward, without judgement." **Cassey Chambers, Operations Director at SADAG**

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