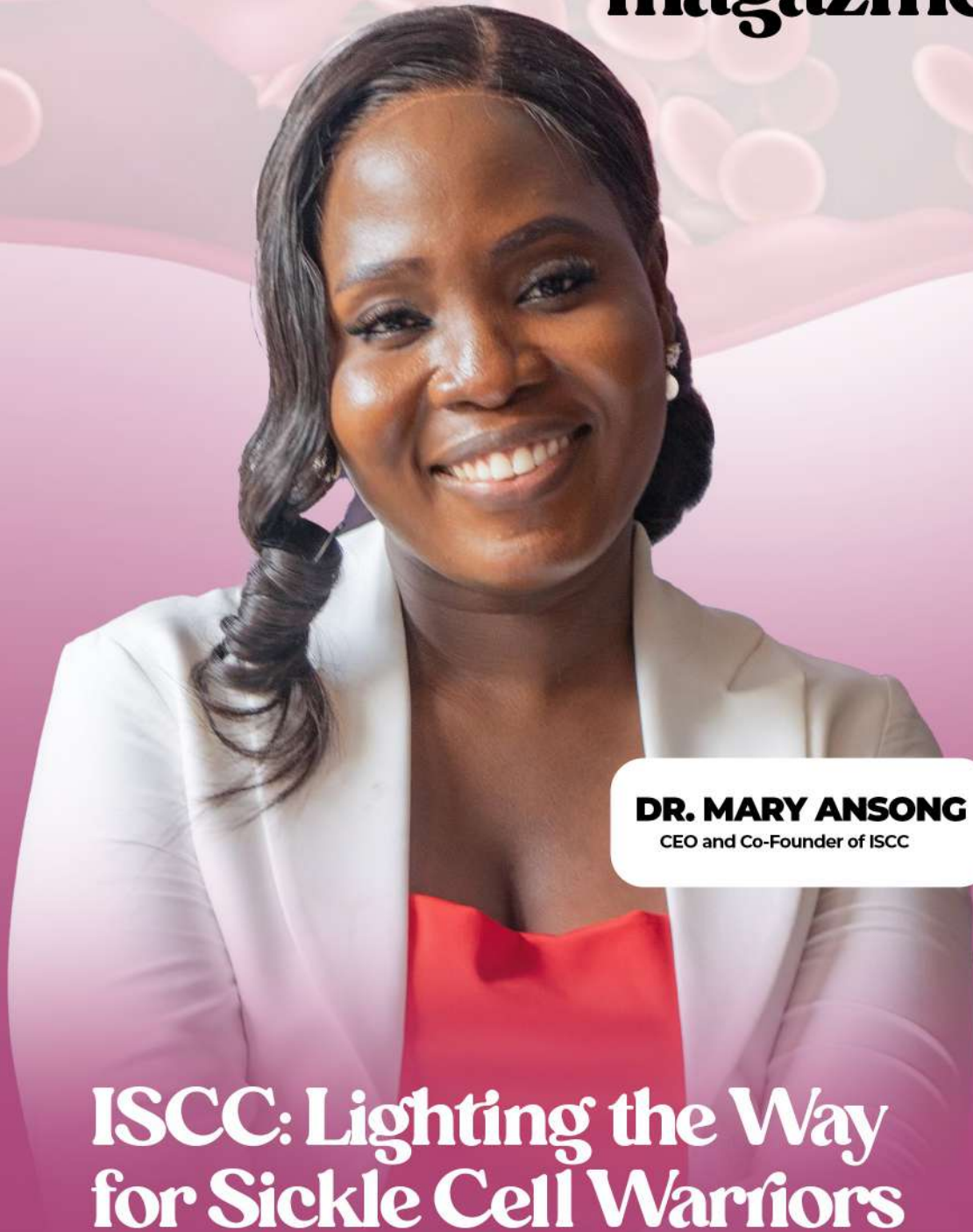


Health Pulse magazine



DR. MARY ANSONG
CEO and Co-Founder of ISCC

ISCC: Lighting the Way for Sickle Cell Warriors

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Integral Hub for Health,
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HCOWAA: Advancing Healthcare Standards in West Africa

The Health Community of West Africa Association (HCOWAA), based in Ghana, is a non-governmental organization dedicated to advancing healthcare across West Africa. Addressing the uneven distribution of medical resources, HCOWAA advocates for regional cooperation through a Health Alliance that unites healthcare stakeholders to create a cohesive health community.

With a mission to improve health outcomes in West Africa, HCOWAA facilitates collaboration, innovation, and research among professionals, leveraging collective resources to enhance healthcare services, policies, and access. HCOWAA envisions a resilient West African healthcare system where institutions and professionals lead groundbreaking research, foster innovation, and influence policies that elevate regional healthcare.

Through initiatives like establishing a regional healthcare database, launching research projects, and hosting policy roundtables, HCOWAA builds strong networks to drive healthcare advancements. Advocacy efforts focus on equitable access, supporting vulnerable populations, and addressing healthcare disparities. The organization's objectives include fostering research and innovation, supporting health policy reforms, and integrating medical equipment manufacturers with healthcare facilities.

HCOWAA also facilitates training programs, academic exchanges, and research grants, ensuring members are equipped with knowledge and skills to address regional health challenges effectively. Networking events like the HCOWAA Medical and Health Industry Investment Summit & Expo connect professionals, offering a platform for partnership and knowledge sharing.

HCOWAA's commitment extends to partnerships with international health organizations and academic institutions, which amplify its impact by introducing global best practices and strengthening West African healthcare infrastructure. Collaborative efforts with international partners promote training, research, and infrastructure upgrades for health facilities, pharmaceutical establishments, and clinics.

In addition, HCOWAA's magazine partnerships, including an MoU with Health Pulse Magazine, provide platforms to publish relevant content, share insights, and enhance visibility for ongoing initiatives. Through these combined efforts, HCOWAA aims to foster a collaborative healthcare environment that not only addresses urgent health challenges but also builds a sustainable, inclusive healthcare future for West Africa.

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Building Resilient Health Systems Through Partnerships

In today's interconnected world, health knows no borders. The spread of infectious diseases, the burden of chronic illnesses, and growing health inequities demand a response that no single nation can shoulder alone. Global partnerships in health are no longer a luxury – they are a lifeline.

These partnerships unite governments, NGOs, the private sector, and communities across continents in a shared mission: to improve health systems, promote equity, and protect populations. Together, they fast-track medical innovation, strengthen disease surveillance, train health workers, and ensure that life-saving treatments reach the people who need them most.

The COVID-19 pandemic made this more urgent than ever. Collaborative initiatives such as COVAX

and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) showcased what global solidarity can achieve – compressing vaccine development timelines and mobilizing resources on a scale previously unimaginable. But beyond emergencies, partnerships continue to tackle long-term challenges like diabetes, mental health, and maternal care.

At their best, these collaborations are rooted in mutual respect and accountability. They pool resources, bridge knowledge gaps, and build local capacity. Whether it's sharing clinical expertise through telemedicine or aligning policies to speed up drug approvals, the collective impact is always greater than the sum of its parts.



Yet, these efforts are not without challenges. Navigating political differences, funding uncertainties, and cultural nuances requires commitment and adaptability. What sustains these alliances is trust, transparency, and a clear, shared vision.

Global health partnerships also play a pivotal role in advancing Universal Health Coverage (UHC). By reinforcing primary healthcare, advocating for equitable access, and reducing financial barriers, they ensure that health care becomes a right, not a privilege.

Ultimately, these partnerships remind us that health is a global public good. When one community is vulnerable, we are all at risk. But when we collaborate – with purpose, compassion, and resolve – we unlock solutions that are smarter, faster, and more inclusive. As we look to the future, investing in strong, long-term health partnerships is not just wise policy. It is



a moral imperative. Because building a healthier world is not a task for one—it's a mission for all.

From August 20th to 22nd, 2025, HCOWAA Association will host The 2025 China–West Africa Medical & Health Industry Expo and AI Diagnosis Deployment & Project Cooperation Summit at the Grand Arena of the Accra International Conference Centre. It's more than just an industry gathering, stakeholders from government, private sector, academia, hospitals, clinics, and the global medical technology community will come together to build partnerships that transcend borders.

With its focus on modernizing healthcare through AI, boosting local production, and strengthening trade ties between China and West Africa, the Expo will spark investments that deliver real, lasting impact from advanced diagnostics and telemedicine to locally assembled equipment and life-saving treatments.

The Pineal Gland:

Your Brain's Tiny Timekeeper with a Powerful Purpose

By Dovia Richeal Elikem

Tucked deep within your brain, nestled in a groove between the two halves of the thalamus, lies a small yet mighty organ—the pineal gland. Though only 5–8 mm long and about the size of a pea, this endocrine gland plays a crucial role in maintaining your body's internal clock and overall well-being.

Often referred to as the “third eye” in spiritual and philosophical traditions, the pineal gland's true biological significance lies in its production of melatonin, the hormone that governs your circadian.

The pineal gland is primarily composed of pinealocytes, which synthesize and release melatonin directly into the cerebrospinal fluid, allowing it to circulate throughout your body. It also contains neurons and neuroglial cells that support its structure and function. Melatonin levels rise in darkness to signal sleep and drop during light to support wakefulness.

Functions of the Pineal Gland

In addition to regulating sleep, this tiny gland plays broader roles, including:

- Mood regulation
- Reproductive hormone influence, especially during puberty
- Immune system modulation (under continued research)
- Light sensitivity, via signals from the eyes through the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN)

Dysfunction or deterioration of the pineal gland may lead to:

- Sleep disorders, including insomnia, jet lag, or irregular sleep patterns
- Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) during winter months
- Mood disturbances
- Calcification, a common effect of aging, which may impair melatonin output
- Rare tumors causing pressure, headaches, or visual changes

How to Support Pineal Gland Health

- Get natural sunlight in the morning to reset your internal clock
- Limit screen time before bed—blue light disrupts melatonin
- Eat melatonin-rich foods like cherries, oats, and walnuts
- Maintain a consistent sleep schedule
- Reduce caffeine and alcohol intake, especially in the evening

The pineal gland has long fascinated thinkers. Philosopher René Descartes called it the “seat of the soul,” while in Hinduism, it's associated with the Ajna chakra or “third eye.” Though symbolic, these associations reflect its enduring mystique as a bridge between the physical and the intuitive.

Though small in size, the pineal gland is a powerhouse of physiological regulation. From managing sleep and mood to possibly influencing broader health functions, it's your brain's silent guardian of rest and rhythm. Support it with good habits, light exposure, and a mindful lifestyle—and let your inner timekeeper thrive.



HCOWAA and CPPA Champion Pharmacist Empowerment at 2025 Development Seminar

As part of the 2025 Community Pharmacy Month celebrations, the Community Practice Pharmacists Association (CPPA), in collaboration with the Early Career Pharmaceutical Group (ECPG), organized a Leadership and Professional Development Seminar at the British Council on Wednesday, 16th July, 2025. The seminar, which brought together community pharmacists and stakeholders, aimed to inspire leadership, encourage innovation, and strengthen the professional capacity of pharmacists across Ghana.

Chairing the event, Pharm. Mrs. Doris Attafua commended the pharmaceutical fraternity for its growth and contributions to healthcare, calling the progress “admirable.” She encouraged participants

to engage openly and share ideas that would move the profession forward.

In his keynote address, Pharm. Dr. Emmanuel Kwaku Ireland, Chairman of CPPA, delivered a compelling call to action. He emphasized that the role of the pharmacist has evolved significantly and now includes responsibilities as clinical service providers, public health educators, and digital health innovators. He challenged pharmacists to strengthen their leadership capabilities and embrace artificial intelligence (AI) to improve healthcare delivery.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

HOST



Representing the Health Community of West Africa (HCOWA), Mr. Prince Opoku Dogbey, Vice President, praised the initiative, noting that the event's objectives align closely with HCOWA's mission. He emphasized the pharmacist's role as the first point of care in many communities, describing them as accessible, trusted, and integral to public health promotion.

Pharm. Dr. John Allotey highlighted strategic leadership principles, stressing that leadership is "a disposition, not a destination," and that lasting impact requires collaboration and self-awareness.

Pharm. Dr. William Kofi Nti urged attendees to rise above limitations, embrace long-term thinking, and understand the power of delayed gratification in professional growth.

Wrapping up the thought leadership session, Brigadier General Pharm. Dr. Michael A. Addy emphasized action-driven leadership: "It's not about titles—it's about team cohesion and delivering

quality services. Rally your teams around a shared vision."

Beyond the speeches, the event featured a networking session and a bazaar, where pharmacists showcased healthcare products and services, reflecting their growing and multifaceted role within the healthcare system. The seminar was a vibrant reminder of the evolving role of community pharmacists and the importance of continuous leadership development in shaping the future of healthcare in Ghana.

HCOWAA, as an official partner, is addressing critical healthcare challenges in West Africa by spearheading impactful initiatives and empowering community pharmacists to extend essential health services to underserved populations, regardless of location or circumstance.

Mobile X-Ray Vans:

Revolutionizing Diagnostics Through Mobility

Dovia Richeal Elikem

Mobile X-ray vans are specialized vehicles equipped with advanced radiographic technology, designed to deliver on-site diagnostic imaging to patients in diverse and underserved locations. They enhance healthcare accessibility, speed, and efficiency, especially in settings where traditional imaging services are not readily available. Dating back to the 1940s, these vans were used with the 1948 Leyland Beaver in the UK for mass tuberculosis screening. These early vans pioneered community-based radiography, allowing the detection of asymptomatic cases and helping reduce disease transmission laying the foundation for today's mobile diagnostics.

How It Works

Each van is retrofitted to include:

- Digital X-ray machine (compact and low-radiation)
- Independent power source (battery, generator, or solar)
- Lead shielding and safety infrastructure
- Radiographer workstation with seating and displays
- Telemedicine connectivity for real-time remote diagnoses

Purpose & Applications

Use Case	Impact
TB Screening Campaigns	Detects cases in slums and high-prevalence areas
Emergency & Disaster Response	Enables rapid imaging in crises
Occupational Health	Screens factory, mining, or port workers
School & Community Outreach	Offers pediatric and elderly screenings
Rural Maternal Care	Assesses respiratory infections in pregnant women





Why It Matters in West Africa

In many West African regions, radiology access is limited to urban hospitals. Mobile X-ray vans:

- Prevent costly, long-distance travel for patients
- Reduce diagnosis delays for TB, pneumonia, fractures
- Lessen the burden on urban hospitals
- Ensure early detection and treatment in hard to reach areas

Tech Benefits

- Digital Imaging – Instant image capture and access
- Cloud Storage – Enables remote expert consultations
- AI Integration – Auto-detection of diseases like TB and pneumonia
- Low Radiation – Safe for frequent or mobile use

Key Advantages

- Rapid Deployment: Setup in 5–15 minutes
- Off-grid Capable: Solar/battery powered for remote use
- Terrain-Ready: Navigates rural or challenging routes
- Patient Comfort: Brings care to the doorstep of the elderly, disabled, or isolated
- Cost-Effective: Lower setup and maintenance costs than fixed imaging centers



Some X-ray vans are adapted for:

- Vehicle and cargo screening at borders
- Contraband and explosives detection
- Rapid surveillance during high-security events

Mobile X-ray vans are more than medical vehicles—they're mobile health infrastructure. They play a pivotal role in expanding access to diagnostics, saving lives through early detection, and empowering health systems with agility and reach.

Caesarean Section:

Smart Medical Choice or Risky Trend?

By Gloria Addo

A Caesarean section (C-section) is a life-saving surgical procedure used to deliver a baby through an incision made in the mother's abdomen and uterus. It becomes necessary when complications arise during pregnancy or labour that could endanger the health of the mother or baby.

Globally, the rate of C-sections has risen to unprecedented levels, though stark disparities persist between high- and low-resource settings. Today, nearly one in every three births in the United States, and increasing numbers worldwide, are by C-section.

There are two main types of Caesarean delivery: **elective** and **emergency**.

An elective C-section is scheduled in advance, often before the due date, to avoid the onset of labour. This is recommended in specific medical situations, such as:

- Placenta praevia (when the placenta covers the cervix)
- Multiple births (e.g. triplets, or twins in certain positions)
- Health issues in the mother that make vaginal birth risky
- Baby in a breech or abnormal position

Approximately 16 in every 100 births are by planned C-section.

An emergency C-section is decided during labour when unexpected complications arise. Common reasons include:

- Fetal distress or concerns about the baby's well-being
- Labour that fails to progress
- Severe maternal conditions like heavy bleeding or pre-eclampsia
- Life-threatening emergencies for the mother or baby

Though the word "emergency" can sound alarming, it's important to understand that such interventions are made with one priority: saving lives.

While generally safe, C-sections—like all major surgeries—carry potential risks, including:

- Infection
- Excessive bleeding
- Reactions to anesthesia
- Blood clots
- Accidental injury to mother or baby

Post-surgery, strict infection control protocols are followed, but mothers must also take personal care of the wound at home to aid healing.

The idea of an unplanned C-section can be overwhelming, but unplanned doesn't mean unprepared. Remember, choosing or needing a C-section does not mean you've failed. Every birth is unique, and every mother's journey is valid.

Whether you deliver vaginally or through C-section, your body will have accomplished something extraordinary: **bringing life into the world.**





Dull to Dazzling:

Why Serums Are Your Skin's Best Friend

By Dovia Richeal Elikem

In the ever-evolving world of skincare, serums have risen to stardom as one of the most powerful tools in your beauty arsenal. Lightweight yet packed with potent ingredients, serums are designed to penetrate deeper layers of the skin and address specific concerns like fine lines, dullness, acne, and dark spots. But what exactly makes a serum so special—and how do you choose the right one?

What Is a Serum?

A serum is a fast-absorbing, concentrated skincare product formulated with high levels of active ingredients. Unlike moisturizers that sit on the skin's surface to hydrate and protect, serums dive deep to treat issues at the source. With a thin, gel-like or watery consistency, they're typically used after cleansing and before moisturizing.

Why Use a Serum?

Because of their high potency and targeted formulas, serums can:

- Brighten dull, tired-looking skin
- Reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles.
- Deeply hydrate and plump with hyaluronic acid
- Fade dark spots and even out skin tone
- Fight acne and control oil with niacinamide or salicylic acid
- Calm redness and strengthen the skin barrier

Match Your Serum to Your Skin Needs:

Skin Concern	Key Ingredients
Dry/Dehydrated Skin	Hyaluronic Acid, Glycerin, Squalane
Dullness/Pigmentation	Vitamin C, Licorice Extract, Alpha Arbutin
Fine Lines/Wrinkles	Retinol, Peptides, Bakuchiol
Acne/Oily Skin	Niacinamide, Zinc, Salicylic Acid
Sensitive Skin	Centella Asiatica, Green Tea, Panthenol
Uneven Texture	Lactic Acid, Glycolic Acid, Mandelic Acid

Uneven Texture Lactic Acid, Glycolic Acid, Mandelic Acid

How to Apply Serum:

1. Cleanse your face.
2. Apply toner (optional).
3. Gently pat 1–3 drops of serum into the skin.
4. Follow with moisturizer to lock it in.
5. In the morning, finish with sunscreen.

Smart Tips:

- Don't mix too many actives (e.g., Retinol + Vitamin C) unless advised.
- Choose serums in dark bottles to preserve potency.
- Store in a cool, dry place to maintain effectiveness.

Adding a serum to your routine isn't just a beauty trend—it's a science-backed step that can transform your skin from the inside out. Whether your goal is a radiant glow, clearer complexion, or smoother texture, there's a serum ready to deliver results. Think of it as skincare, supercharged.





Senegal Becomes Ninth African Country to Eliminate Trachoma

The World Health Organization (WHO) has officially validated Senegal for eliminating trachoma as a public health problem, marking a major public health victory. Senegal becomes the ninth country in WHO's African Region—and the 25th globally—to reach this milestone.

"This is yet another sign of the remarkable progress being made against neglected tropical diseases globally," said WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "I commend Senegal for freeing its population from this disease."

Trachoma, a leading cause of infectious blindness, has plagued Senegal since the early 1900s. The country's commitment to its elimination began in earnest in 1998 when it joined the WHO Alliance for the Global Elimination of Trachoma. With comprehensive mapping completed by 2017 and disease control integrated into national eye health programs, Senegal implemented the WHO-endorsed SAFE strategy—Surgery, Antibiotics, Facial cleanliness, and Environmental improvement—reaching 2.8 million people in 24 districts.

Health Minister Dr. Ibrahima Sy lauded the achievement, saying, "Today we celebrate our

victory against trachoma, 21 years after the one against dracunculiasis. We are making steady progress against other neglected tropical diseases like sleeping sickness and onchocerciasis."

Senegal's success is part of a broader effort in Africa, where 93 million people remain at risk of trachoma, accounting for 90% of the global burden. The number of people needing treatment in the region has fallen by 96 million since 2014—a 51% reduction.

"Trachoma has cast a shadow over communities in Senegal for more than a century," said Dr. Jean-Marie Vianny Yameogo, WHO Representative in Senegal. "This validation is a powerful tribute to the tireless efforts of frontline workers, communities, and partners."

WHO will continue to support Senegal to prevent resurgence. The country joins others such as Ghana, Gambia, and Morocco that have successfully eliminated trachoma, furthering global goals to eradicate neglected tropical diseases by 2030.

SOURCE- WHO

The Detox Deception:

Why Juice Cleanses Don't Cleanse Anything

By Dovia Richeal Elikem



The Myth:

"To stay healthy and get rid of toxins, you need to detox your body regularly — preferably with juice cleanses, herbal teas, or fasting."

Your body is not a dirty pipe that needs to be flushed out with expensive juices or starvation diets. It's a **highly intelligent biological system** equipped with natural detoxification tools:

- **Liver** – filters and neutralizes harmful substances
- **Kidneys** – flush out waste through urine
- **Lungs, skin, and digestive tract** – all help remove toxins naturally

Our bodies and minds already have the ability to handle these challenges. This process of maintaining physical and emotional balance is called Homeostasis.

Juice cleanses and so-called "detox diets" do not enhance these functions. In fact, prolonged juice fasting can deprive your body of essential nutrients like protein and fat, and in some cases, spike your blood sugar due to excessive fruit sugars.

Potential Side Effects of Juice Detoxes:

- Fatigue and irritability
- Blood sugar instability
- Muscle loss due to protein deficiency
- Rebound overeating and weight gain
- Electrolyte imbalance (in extreme cases)

The Real Detox Plan:

- **Drink plenty of water** to support kidney function
- **Eat fiber-rich foods** like fruits, veggies, and whole grains to promote healthy digestion
- **Get regular exercise** to support circulation and lymphatic drainage
- **Limit alcohol and processed foods**
- **Sleep well** – detoxification peaks at night
- **Support your liver** with foods like leafy greens, turmeric, garlic, and healthy fats

There's currently little research that proves that detoxification therapies are helpful. Unfortunately, there are many gimmicky, expensive, unnecessary, and potentially harmful products, programs, and practitioners who exaggerate the helpfulness of their detoxification plans. In general, avoid any approach that sounds dramatic or extreme. If you are going to try one, follow guidelines that seem reasonable and safe, and that promote a healthy lifestyle. Choose one that helps you feel in control and that does not promise results that seem unrealistic.

You don't need a "cleanse" — your body is already a detox machine. Fuel it with real nutrition, not fad marketing.

Acromegaly

Gloria Addo

Acromegaly is a rare but serious hormonal condition that affects approximately 3 to 14 out of every 100,000 people. It typically develops in adulthood and causes certain bones, organs, and tissues in the body to grow abnormally large over time.

The condition is usually caused by a non-cancerous tumor on the pituitary gland, a small gland located at the base of the brain. This tumor leads to the overproduction of growth hormone (GH). When too much GH circulates in the body, it causes bones and soft tissues to grow in unusual ways.

In children, too much growth hormone causes gigantism, leading to excessive height. But in adults who have already finished growing taller acromegaly causes bones in the hands, feet, and face to thicken and enlarge. The changes often happen slowly, making the condition hard to detect early.

Common symptoms include:

- Enlarged hands and feet (shoes and rings no longer fit)
- A more prominent jaw or forehead
- Increased size of the lips, nose, and tongue
- Deepening of the voice
- Excessive sweating or oily skin

Because the signs develop gradually, both patients and doctors may overlook them for years.

If left untreated, acromegaly can lead to serious complications such as high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, sleep apnea, and arthritis. However, early diagnosis and treatment can significantly improve symptoms and reduce the risk of long-term health problems.

Acromegaly is treatable and in some cases, curable.

Treatment options include:

- **Surgery:** Removal of the pituitary tumor is often the first step. Cure rates are high for small tumors (around 85%) but lower for larger ones (40–50%).
- **Medication:** These help control growth hormone levels and are often used when surgery isn't possible or doesn't fully resolve the issue.
- **Radiation therapy:** May be used when surgery and medication don't achieve full control.

In some cases, medications are used to shrink the tumor before surgery, while others may require long-term drug therapy to manage hormone levels. If you or a loved one notices gradual changes in hand or foot size, facial features, or other symptoms mentioned above, it's important to talk to a healthcare provider. Simple blood tests can check your growth hormone levels and help determine the cause. Acromegaly may be rare, but awareness and early treatment can make all the difference.



Redefining Mental Health in African Communities

By Dovia Richeal Elikem

Mental health is often spoken about in whispers—if at all—in many African communities. Despite growing awareness of its importance, cultural stigma, limited resources, and historical mistrust of medical institutions continue to prevent countless individuals from seeking the help they need. The phrase “pray about it” has become a default response to emotional and psychological suffering. Yet, faith without action is not always enough.

Mental health struggles are real, valid, and deserving of professional support—not just silence, avoidance, or spiritual platitudes.

We must ask ourselves: how many lives could be saved if we dismantled the belief that seeking therapy is a sign of weakness? How many tragedies could be prevented if we treated mental illness with the same urgency as physical illness?

In many African and diasporic communities, mental health remains a taboo topic. We are taught to “be strong,” to “keep pushing,” and to “leave it in God’s hands.” While faith is powerful and deeply rooted in our lives, it should not replace mental health care. **God and therapy can coexist.** Prayer and professional help can work hand in hand.

The reluctance to seek help often stems from deeply embedded fears—shame, judgment, or repercussions. Historical injustices, including unethical medical practices and racial bias, have bred mistrust in healthcare systems. Black men

especially are expected to suppress their emotions, to suffer in silence. But silence does not heal—it deepens wounds.

There is also the damaging myth that mental illness is a “white people’s problem.” This is false. **Mental health is a human issue.** Depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other conditions do not discriminate. Yet many in our communities still dismiss these struggles, forcing individuals into isolation. That isolation can spiral into self-harm, substance abuse, or even violence.

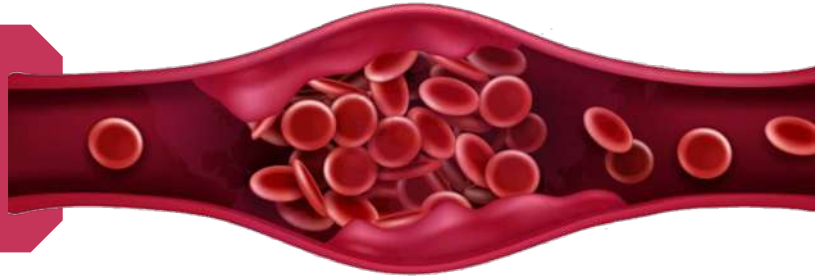
To change this narrative, education and advocacy are critical. We must normalize mental health discussions in our families, schools, churches, and workplaces. Therapy is not a last resort; it is a tool for healing. Seeking help is strength. Naming your pain is the first step toward reclaiming your power.

Faith communities must also do their part. Churches should become safe spaces that encourage both spiritual and psychological healing. Seeking therapy is not a betrayal of faith—it is an act of survival.

Mental health is not a matter of weakness or morality. It is a public health crisis that demands compassion, courage, and collective action.

We must do better. We must advocate for mental health resources across all sectors. We must have the difficult conversations, check in with our loved ones, and reject the silence that allows suffering to grow. Let’s stop waiting for tragedy to take mental health seriously.

ISCC:



Lighting the Way for Sickle Cell Warriors

By Gloria Addo

Sickle cell disease (SCD) remains one of the most overlooked genetic conditions globally—often clouded by myths, stigma, and limited access to care. In Ghana and across Africa, the burden is especially heavy.

For Dr. Mary Ansong, CEO and Co-Founder of ISCC, sickle cell disease is not just a medical condition—it's personal. It's the tears of a twin sister after a misdiagnosis. It's the quiet grief of losing a beloved uncle at 19 and a close friend at just 28. It's the helplessness of not knowing where to turn for answers. Out of these deeply personal moments was born the **International Sickle Cell Centre (ISCC)** a place of hope, healing, and fierce advocacy.

In a world where sickle cell warriors often suffer in silence, Dr. Ansong is determined to give them a voice. Through education, support programs, and bold community action, she is changing the narrative. In this exclusive interview, she opens up about her journey, the battles still ahead, and why every person with sickle cell deserves not just care but a future filled with dignity and possibility.

1. What inspired you to start the International Sickle Cell Centre (ISCC)?

It began with a personal awakening. I had no idea about my sickle cell status until my twin sister was mistakenly told she had sickle cell disease while at university. After confirmatory testing, we both discovered we were carriers. That revelation led us to conversations with family members, and we learned we had lost an uncle at age 19 to the disease. I also lost two close friends—one a roommate, another just 28 years old—both to complications from sickle cell.

Professionally, I was already a medical doctor. But this hit home, and I realized how huge and neglected the problem was—not just in Ghana or Sub-Saharan Africa, but globally. I faced difficulty accessing genetic counseling myself and realized these gaps had to be addressed. That's when we decided to build ISCC.

**Dr. Mary
Ansong**

CEO and Co-Founder of ISCC

2. How would you explain sickle cell disease to someone unfamiliar with it?

Sickle cell disease (SCD) is an inherited blood disorder. It is not contagious and certainly not a curse or punishment from God. When two carriers of the sickle cell gene (AS) have a child, there's a chance the child may inherit the SS genotype, resulting in SCD.

The disease causes red blood cells to take on a sickle or banana shape, making them sticky and prone to clumping. These clumps block blood vessels, restricting oxygen flow and causing tissue damage and pain—what we call a sickle cell crisis. If not managed properly, this can lead to complications like stroke, blindness, heart or kidney failure, and even death.

3. What are some common myths about SCD your organization is working to debunk?

The most dangerous myth is that SCD is a death sentence. That's no longer true. With proper care, people with sickle cell can live full lives into their 60s and beyond. We also counter beliefs that it's a spiritual curse, that people with SCD can't thrive, or that nothing can be done about it.

Another misconception is that carriers (AS) are completely unaffected. While they don't have the disease, carriers must know their status and make informed decisions when choosing partners. We advocate that everyone—regardless of age—should know and remember their genotype.

4. The global theme for this year is “Giving Sickle Cell a Voice Through Advocacy and Action.” How is ISCC responding to this?

To us, the theme underscores the importance of both awareness and intervention. We're committed to speaking out through education campaigns, stakeholder dialogues, and community-based activities. Our recent event at Tang Palace Hotel, for instance, gathered medical experts and policymakers to spotlight the gaps in care and how to address them. We are making advocacy actionable.

5. How does ISCC support patients and their families directly?

We combine advocacy with real interventions. Our “Back to School” initiative helps sickle cell warriors who dropped out due to illness return to education. We also empower caregivers, especially mothers who've had to leave jobs, by offering entrepreneurial training and support to regain financial independence. So far, we've screened over 7,000 individuals, helped two people return to school, and supported two mothers to gain employment. Our long-term dream is to open a dedicated sickle cell clinic to provide continuous, specialized care.

6. Stigma remains a barrier, especially in African societies. How are you tackling this?

Stigma thrives in silence. That's why we involve traditional leaders, faith-based organizations, and media in our campaigns. By engaging these trusted voices, we break the myths and encourage empathy. We make it clear that sickle cell is a medical condition, not a spiritual issue or taboo.

7. Since starting ISCC, what progress have you seen? What challenges remain?

In four years, we've seen growth in public awareness and collaboration across health institutions. We've won three awards, including the 40 Under 40 Award for Advocacy, but we know we still have a long way to go.

The biggest challenge remains access to care—affordable, reliable, and consistent. Newborn screening, for example, is not yet universal in Ghana. Many people still don't know their status. And many patients still don't have a dedicated place to seek proper treatment.

8. What are you doing to bridge the healthcare access gap for patients?

Education and early diagnosis are key. We advocate for prenatal screening and newborn testing, which are available but not widespread. We also push for integration of genetic counseling services into primary healthcare, and work with local labs and clinics to expand access. Ultimately, we need a purpose-built sickle cell clinic. That's our top goal—one space where patients can receive holistic care without the fear of being misunderstood or turned away.

9. How does youth education factor into your long-term strategy?

It's central. Many young people engage in relationships without knowing their genotypes, sometimes leading to avoidable cases of SCD. We emphasize sickle cell education in schools, youth clubs, and media platforms. Genotype knowledge should be as common as knowing your blood type.

10. How can people support your work—not just during Awareness Month but all year round?


We welcome all kinds of support—financial donations, medical supplies, professional skills, or volunteer time. Every little contribution helps us reach more people and change more lives. Our greatest needs right now are funding for outreach and establishing our clinic.

To sickle cell warriors, we say: You are not alone. We see you. We're fighting for you every day. And we won't stop until you have the care and dignity you deserve.



How Much Alcohol is Too Much?

By Gloria Addo



Ever wake up after a night out wondering, “Did I drink too much?” Or maybe you’re curious about how your daily glass of wine affects your body over time. Figuring out the right amount of alcohol for you is a tricky puzzle. What’s fine for one person might be too much for another. Your body, your health, and even your genes all play a part.

This article will help you understand the various ways alcohol impacts your well-being. We’ll also look at how to spot signs of problematic alcohol use and where to find help.

Knowing what a standard drink is can help you stay aware of how much alcohol you’re really consuming. In the U.S., a standard drink contains about 14 grams (0.6 ounces) of pure alcohol—equal to a 12 oz beer, 5 oz of wine, or 1.5 oz of spirits. Health guidelines recommend no more than one drink per day for women and two for men to reduce health risks. But even moderate drinking isn’t risk-free. Your body size, age, genetics, and health conditions

all affect how alcohol impacts you. People with liver disease, mental health issues, or those taking medications should be especially cautious. Drinking while pregnant can cause lifelong harm to a baby, including Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.

Heavy or binge drinking—four or more drinks for women, five or more for men in a short time can lead to alcohol poisoning, liver disease, cancer, heart problems, and alcohol use disorder (AUD). Warning signs of AUD include needing more alcohol to feel effects, neglecting responsibilities, and drinking despite negative consequences.

If you choose to drink, set clear limits, pace yourself, and never drink on an empty stomach. Plan safe transportation ahead of time. And if alcohol is causing problems in your life, don’t wait—talk to a doctor or seek help from support organizations. Understanding your relationship with alcohol is a key step toward protecting your health and future.

From Sickness to Strength:

How Families Can Prevent Common Illnesses Together

By Dovia Richeal Elikem

While illness is a part of life, families who prioritize health together can significantly reduce how often and how severely they get sick. From the flu to stomach bugs, prevention starts at home with smart habits, hygiene, and teamwork.

1. Practice Good Hygiene

Handwashing is one of the simplest and most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Teach kids (and remind adults) to wash hands:

- Before eating
- After using the bathroom
- After playing outside
- After coughing or sneezing

Use soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or hand sanitizer when necessary. Make hygiene fun with songs or reward charts for younger kids.

2. Eat for Immunity

Fueling the body with proper nutrition strengthens its defenses. Build meals with:

- Fruits and vegetables (especially citrus, berries, and leafy greens)
- Whole grains and lean proteins
- Plenty of water and limited sugary drinks

Nutrients like Vitamin C, zinc, and antioxidants help build resistance against infections.

3. Prioritize Sleep

Adequate rest allows the body to heal and reset. Children need 9–12 hours of sleep; adults should aim for at least 7. Keep consistent bedtimes and a calming routine to improve sleep quality.

4. Get Moving Together

Physical activity strengthens both body and mind. Walk as a family, play outdoor games, or join local activities. Movement improves circulation, supports immunity, and lowers stress.

5. Stay Vaccinated

Vaccinations offer essential protection. Keep up with schedules for every family member, including flu shots. If unsure, consult a healthcare provider.



6. Prepare for Sick Days

Have a home plan when someone is unwell. Teach cough etiquette, isolate when needed, disinfect shared spaces, and avoid sharing utensils or towels.

7. Support Emotional Health

Stress can weaken the immune system. Encourage open dialogue, promote balance, and teach relaxation techniques to build resilience in both kids and adults.

Building a resilient, health-conscious family doesn't require perfection; it requires consistency and care. By working together, families can turn everyday habits into powerful tools for preventing illness. From healthy meals to clean hands and warm conversations, each small action adds up to a stronger, healthier home. Because when one person thrives, the whole family moves from sickness to strength together.



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2025 Health Expo Presents Integral Hub for Health, Technology & Trade – Vice President, HCOWAA.



Prince Opoku Dogbey
(Vice President HCOWA Association)

This Expo is not just an event; it is HCOWA's invitation to the world to come, invest, build, and grow with us in healthcare.”

With these words, Prince Opoku Dogbey, Vice President of the Health Community of West Africa Association (HCOWA), set the tone for what promises to be the most ambitious health and medical industry gathering West Africa has ever seen the 2025 China–West Africa Medical & Health Industry Expo and AI Diagnosis & Project Cooperation Summit.

Announced at a press conference held at the Ghana Health Service Headquarters on July 15, 2025, Prince Opoku Dogbey, Vice President of HCOWA Association declared that HCOWA is ready to lead West Africa's journey into a future defined by medical innovation, AI-driven healthcare, and impactful partnerships.

Partnering strategically with the Ghana Health Service, this second edition of the Expo is already set to welcome over 100 leading medical exhibitors from China and more than 1,500 buyers, merchants, doctors, researchers, and health-tech players from across the region. The goal: attract direct investment, forge new technology partnerships, and open pathways for skills training, job creation, and sustainable growth.

At its core, the Expo aims to unlock direct investments, drive technology transfer, and foster sustainable partnerships between Ghanaian and Chinese institutions. With plans underway for medical equipment assembly plants, local reagent production, AI diagnosis hubs, and telemedicine centers, the event will catalyze job creation and skills development for Ghana's youth in fields such as biotechnology, AI, and health technology.

Beyond the exhibition halls, the Expo will host four strategic forums: Oncology, Ophthalmology, Dialysis and Kidney Health, and AI & Traditional Chinese Medicine. These forums are designed not just for discussion, but for real-world collaboration, solution-building, and matchmaking between stakeholders ready to invest in transformative healthcare solutions.

One of the Expo's headline innovations is the launch of the AI Medical Supply Chain Platform—Ghana will be the first West African country to pilot this digital platform for smarter, faster, and more transparent medical supply trade and inventory management. This bold move cements Ghana's position as an emerging hub for medical technology, research, and digital health innovation in the region.

Yet, the Expo's vision goes beyond commerce and technology. With a deep commitment to community care, HCOWA will again donate critical medical equipment to selected hospitals as part of its Charity Dinner and Awards Night. This follows last year's impactful donation of a Glycated Hemoglobin Analyzer to the Cape Coast Regionally hospital for diabetes management—proving that compassion and cutting-edge technology can, and must, go hand in hand.

The 2025 China–West Africa Medical & Health Industry Expo and AI Diagnosis Deployment & Project Cooperation Summit is more than just an industry gathering — it is a gateway for collaboration, investment, and shared solutions under the theme

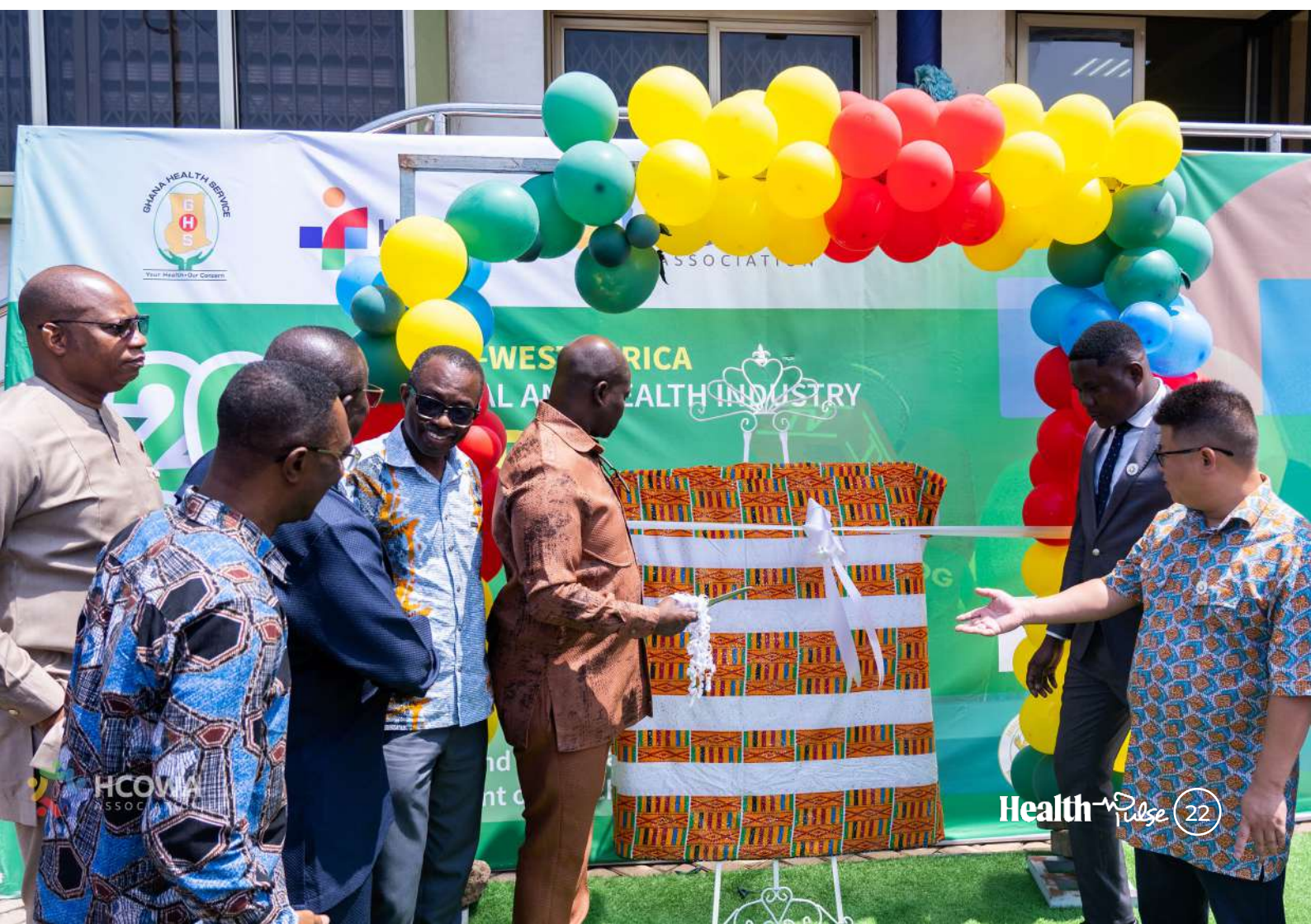
“Promoting Trade and Investment for Industrial Development and Sustainable Health Outcomes.”

From August 20th to 22nd, 2025, at the Grand Arena of the Accra International Conference Centre, stakeholders from government, private sector, academia, hospitals, clinics, and the global medical technology community will come together to build partnerships that transcend borders.

With its focus on modernizing healthcare through AI, boosting local production, and strengthening trade ties between China and West Africa, the Expo will spark investments that deliver real, lasting impact — from advanced diagnostics and telemedicine to locally assembled equipment and life-saving treatments.

As Ghana opens its doors to the world this August, this official launch is a clarion call to every doctor, hospital administrator, health entrepreneur, policymaker, student, and investor is called to join this revolution in healthcare.

Source: Healthpulseonline



The Healthy Man Code

Dovia Richeal Elikem

Men's health is about more than just hitting the gym—it's a life-long commitment to physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Unfortunately, many men tend to ignore warning signs, skip routine checkups, or downplay stress and fatigue. But taking charge of your health today can prevent complications tomorrow.

1. Get Regular Checkups

Many serious conditions—like high blood pressure, diabetes, and prostate issues—develop silently. Regular health screenings help detect these early. Key checkups include:

- Blood pressure & cholesterol
- Blood sugar (for diabetes)
- Prostate health (especially after age 40)
- Colon cancer screening (starting around age 45)



2. Protect Your Heart

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in men worldwide. To lower your risk:

- Eat heart-healthy foods (lean proteins, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables)
- Limit salt, alcohol, and processed foods
- Stay physically active (aim for 30 minutes, 5 days a week)
- Don't smoke

3. Prioritize Mental Health

Men are less likely to seek help for depression, anxiety, or stress-related conditions. Mental wellness is just as important as physical health. Talk to someone, whether it's a friend, partner, or therapist. You're not weak for needing support—you're wise.

4. Maintain a Healthy Weight

Obesity increases your risk for heart disease, diabetes, and joint problems. Focus on balanced meals and regular exercise. Try strength training and aerobic activities for optimal results.

5. Stay Safe and Smart

- Practice safe sex and get regular STI checks.
- Use sunscreen—skin cancer affects men more after age 50
- Wear protective gear at work or during sports
- Limit risky behaviors like reckless driving or excessive drinking

6. Build Healthy Habits Early

Good habits formed in your 20s and 30s pay off in your 40s, 50s, and beyond. It's never too early—or too late—to take control of your health.



Tuna Tostadas

Tuna Tostadas, crispy and refreshing, are a vibrant fusion of fresh tuna, zesty citrus, and crunchy toppings layered on a crisp tortilla. Perfect as a light appetizer or snack, they deliver bold flavor with every bite.

A delightful balance of texture and taste that's both satisfying and nutritious.

Ingredients

- 3 (5 ounce) cans solid white tuna packed in water, drained
- ½ (10 ounce) can sweet corn, drained
- ½ onion, finely chopped
- 1 bunch cilantro, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons salsa
- 1 lime, juiced

- hot sauce to taste
- salt and pepper to taste
- sour cream, for topping
- 8 tostada shells

Directions

1. Place tuna in a bowl and flake with a fork. Stir in corn, onion, cilantro, salsa, and lime juice. Season with a few dashes of hot sauce, and salt and pepper to taste; stir to combine.
2. Spoon onto tostada shells. Top each tostada with a dollop of sour cream and a bit more hot sauce. Enjoy your meal.



The Healing Power of Meditation

By Gloria Addo

Ever thought of a personal mental form of Mental Hygiene? In a fast-paced world where stress, anxiety, and burnout have become all too common, **Meditation** offers a powerful, science backed way to reclaim mental clarity, emotional stability, and physical wellness.

At its core, meditation is the practice of training your attention learning to quiet the mind and focus inward, often resulting in a state of calm concentration and emotional balance. One of the most widely practiced and studied forms is mindfulness meditation, which teaches you to be present in the moment while observing your thoughts and feelings without judgment.

Mindfulness has two essential components: attention and acceptance. Attention means tuning into what you're experiencing—whether it's your breath, bodily sensations, or thoughts. Acceptance involves observing those experiences without reacting to or criticizing them. You simply notice, acknowledge, and let them pass.

This simple-sounding approach can have profound effects. According to research from over 200 studies, mindfulness-based therapies especially Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) have shown significant success in reducing stress, anxiety, depression, and even chronic pain. MBCT, in particular, has been found to reduce the risk of relapse in people with a history of major depression.

Beyond mental health, meditation may also benefit physical health. Studies have found that mindfulness can lower fatigue, ease pain, improve immune response, and potentially help the body recover more quickly from illnesses like the common cold or flu.

Meditation doesn't require expensive tools or complex techniques—just time, patience, and consistency. Many mindfulness programs include breathing exercises, gentle yoga, and guided meditations that help build awareness of the body and mind.

Psychologists note that people who regularly practice mindfulness are less likely to spiral into negative thinking during stressful moments and are more capable of staying present instead of dwelling on past worries.

Although it may take a bit of time to feel natural, the practice of mindfulness meditation is a lifelong tool—a gentle, empowering way to nurture both mental and physical well-being. Start small. Stay consistent. Your mind and body will thank you.

The Power of a Simple Brisk Walk

By Gloria Addo

Physical activity doesn't have to mean hitting the gym or running marathons. In fact, something as simple and accessible as a daily brisk walk can dramatically improve your health and well-being. Walking is a low-impact, natural activity that fits easily into most lifestyles—and its benefits are remarkable.

Regular brisk walking can do more than just get you from one place to another. It helps you:

- Maintain a healthy weight and burn body fat
- Manage or prevent serious health conditions such as heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and even some cancers
- Boost cardiovascular fitness and muscle endurance
- Strengthen bones and muscles
- Elevate mood, sharpen thinking, and improve sleep
- Enhance coordination, balance, and energy levels
- Reduce stress and tension
- Strengthen your immune system

The beauty of walking lies in its flexibility. The faster, farther, and more often you walk, the more benefits you reap. As you build stamina, you can gradually increase your pace and distance, transforming a casual stroll into a powerful workout.

Want to burn more calories or improve your heart health even faster? Try interval walking

alternate periods of brisk walking with slower recovery walks. This form of interval training increases cardiovascular fitness and can be done in less time than steady-paced walking.

How Much Should You Walk?

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, adults should aim for:

- At least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity (like brisk walking) or 75 minutes of vigorous activity weekly
- Strength training at least twice a week, targeting all major muscle groups

As a general goal, try to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days. Short on time? Break it into smaller sessions throughout the day—every bit counts.

If you're new to exercise, begin with just five minutes a day, and add five more each week. Gradually, you'll build up to 30 minutes or more per day. For even greater health benefits, aim for **60 minutes of activity** most days of the week.

You don't need special gear or a gym membership to change your life. A brisk daily walk is a simple, effective, and enjoyable way to boost your physical and mental health. So lace up your shoes, step outside, and take the first step toward a healthier you—one walk at a time.

Pressure from the Bump

The Strain of Hypertension In Pregnancy



DR. MICHELLE NUAME

Medical Officer – LEKMA Hospital

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, occurs when readings consistently exceed 140/90 mmHg in two separate measurements taken hours apart. While this might seem like just numbers on a monitor, the implications during pregnancy are profound. At 24 weeks pregnant, Akosua from Akim Oda thought her severe headaches were just pregnancy stress. Three days later, she was fighting for both her life and her baby's in the emergency room.

Her story reflects a troubling reality across Ghana: hypertensive disorders affect up to 37% of pregnancies in our teaching hospitals rates far exceeding the global average of 6-8%. Despite being largely manageable with proper care, these conditions remain a leading cause of maternal and infant mortality in our communities.

Dr. Michelle Nuame, a medical officer of LEKMA hospital, explains: "What makes hypertensive disorders particularly dangerous during pregnancy is how they affect both mother and baby simultaneously. **For babies;** Low birth weight, premature delivery, growth restriction, and in severe cases, stillbirth. **For mothers;** Seizures, blood

clotting disorders, organ failure, and potentially fatal complications.

The Five Faces of Pregnancy Hypertension

1. Chronic Hypertension High blood pressure that existed before pregnancy, requiring careful monitoring throughout the nine months.
2. Gestational Hypertension Blood pressure elevation that begins after 20 weeks of pregnancy, without other complications.
3. Pre-eclampsia The game-changer: high blood pressure accompanied by protein in the urine, signaling that organs are under stress.
4. Severe Pre-eclampsia Blood pressure above 160/110 mmHg with alarming symptoms such as: Severe headaches that don't respond to medication, Sharp upper abdominal pain Visual disturbances, Confusion or altered mental state, and significantly reduced urine output.
5. Eclampsia The most critical stage: pre-eclampsia with seizures. This constitutes a medical emergency requiring immediate intervention.

Who's at Risk?

Research has identified several factors that increase vulnerability:

Age: Women under 20 or over 35 face higher risks

Medical history: Pre-existing diabetes, obesity, kidney disease, or blood clotting disorders

Pregnancy factors: First pregnancy, multiple pregnancies (twins/triplets), or previous pre-eclampsia

Genetic factors: Family history of hypertensive disorders.

Importantly, these conditions occur more frequently in women of African descent, making awareness particularly crucial in our communities.

The Prevention Imperative

The encouraging news? Early detection and proper management can prevent most severe complications. This is where Ghana's antenatal care system becomes crucial.

"Every antenatal visit is an opportunity for early detection. At each visit, we check blood pressure, test urine for protein, and educate women about warning signs. When we catch problems early, outcomes improve dramatically."



Ask The Expert

Key warning signs every pregnant woman should know:

- Persistent headaches
- Visual changes (blurred vision, seeing spots)
- Upper abdominal pain
- Sudden swelling of face, hands, or feet
- Decreased fetal movement

Breaking Down Barriers to Care

Despite the availability of effective interventions, several challenges persist in Ghana's healthcare landscape:

1. Geographic barriers: Rural women often travel hours to reach facilities equipped for high-risk pregnancies.
2. Financial constraints: Even with National Health Insurance, indirect costs can deter women from seeking regular care.
3. Knowledge gaps: Many women do not recognize warning signs or understand the importance of consistent antenatal visits.
4. Healthcare system limitations: Some facilities lack adequate equipment or trained personnel for managing severe cases.

Success Stories: When Early Detection Works

Take the case of Fatima, a 32-year-old trader from Tamale. During her routine 28-week checkup, elevated blood pressure readings prompted her midwife to recommend weekly monitoring. When protein appeared in her urine two weeks later, she was referred to a specialist and started on appropriate medication.

"I delivered a healthy baby at 37 weeks," Fatima shares. "Without those regular checkups, I might have lost both my baby and my life."

The Role of Community and Family

Traditional Ghanaian culture has always emphasized community support during pregnancy. Today, this support system can be enhanced with health awareness:

1. Partners and families can learn to recognize warning signs
2. Community health volunteers can provide education and support referrals
3. Religious and traditional leaders can promote the importance of antenatal care
4. Women's groups can share experiences and encourage mutual support

What Needs to Change

Addressing hypertensive disorders in pregnancy

requires coordinated action:

Healthcare system strengthening: More trained midwives, better-equipped facilities, and improved referral systems.

Community education: Widespread awareness campaigns about warning signs and the importance of antenatal care.

Policy interventions: Ensuring that quality maternal healthcare is accessible and affordable for all women.

Research investment: Understanding why rates are higher in our population and developing targeted interventions.

A Personal Responsibility

Every pregnant woman has a role to play in her own health and that of her baby:

- Start antenatal care early, ideally before 12 weeks
- Attend all scheduled appointments, even when feeling well
- Monitor your body and report unusual symptoms immediately
- Take prescribed medications as directed
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle with proper nutrition and appropriate exercise

The Path Forward

Hypertensive disorders in pregnancy represent both a challenge and an opportunity for Ghana's healthcare system. While current statistics are sobering, the tools for prevention and management are available and effective.

The question isn't whether we can reduce maternal and infant mortality from these conditions; it's whether we will commit the resources and attention necessary to make it happen.

Every pregnant woman who receives timely, quality care is a victory. Every family that doesn't have to mourn a preventable loss is a step toward the Ghana we envision; one where pregnancy is celebrated without fear, where motherhood begins with joy rather than anxiety.

As Akosua, now a healthy mother of two, often tells other women: "My headaches almost killed me because I didn't know they were dangerous. Now I make sure every pregnant woman in my community knows what I learned too late—that small signs can mean big trouble, but early action can save lives."





Health Terms

Here are some health terms to expand your knowledge in surgery:-

Amniocentesis:	Surgical puncture of the amniotic sac for fluid removal during pregnancy
Appendectomy:	Surgical removal of the appendix
Arthrodesis:	Surgical fixation of a joint through bone fusion
Laparotomy:	Incision into the abdomen for surgical access
Rhinoplasty:	Surgical repair of the nose
Lithotripsy:	Crushing of a stone in the bladder or urinary system

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