

Health Pulse

magazine

**40 Years of Breast Cancer Awareness
Marked by Major Medical Milestones and
Lives Saved**

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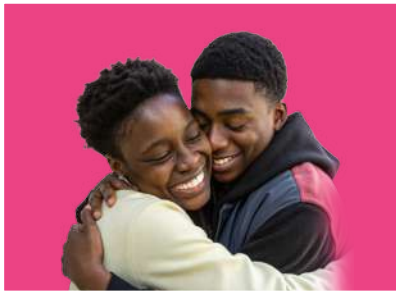
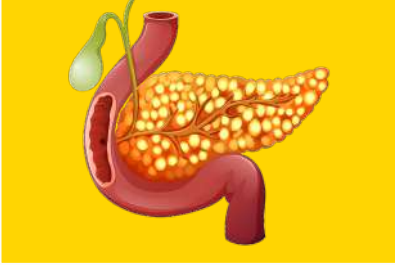
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HCOWAA: Advancing Healthcare Standards in West Africa

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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The Power of Health Partnerships

In today's interconnected world, no single country or institution can single-handedly overcome the complex health challenges confronting society. The growing demand for quality healthcare, the spread of infectious diseases, and the need for advanced medical technology call for a united front. This is where the power of health partnerships becomes essential. Through collaboration, nations can share expertise, resources, and technology to strengthen healthcare systems and improve people's lives.

One of the most transformative examples of such collaboration is the growing partnership between West Africa and China. Over the past few years, this relationship has opened new avenues for medical innovation, infrastructure development, and knowledge exchange. Chinese medical institutions and companies have partnered with West African governments, hospitals, and associations such as the Health Community of West Africa (HCOWA) to establish modern healthcare facilities, introduce AI-powered diagnostic systems, and promote joint medical research. These initiatives have not only enhanced access to specialized medical care but also contributed to capacity building by training local health professionals.

Such partnerships go beyond infrastructure; they are bridges of shared learning and mutual progress. When West African and Chinese medical experts work together, they exchange ideas, develop new treatment approaches, and build sustainable systems that respond to local health needs. This collaboration has also strengthened public health resilience by improving disease surveillance, pharmaceutical manufacturing, and telemedicine services across the region.

At the heart of these partnerships lies a shared vision — the belief that healthcare should be inclusive, advanced, and accessible to all. By combining West Africa's growing medical potential with China's technological and research expertise, both sides are charting a path toward a healthier, smarter, and more self-reliant healthcare system.

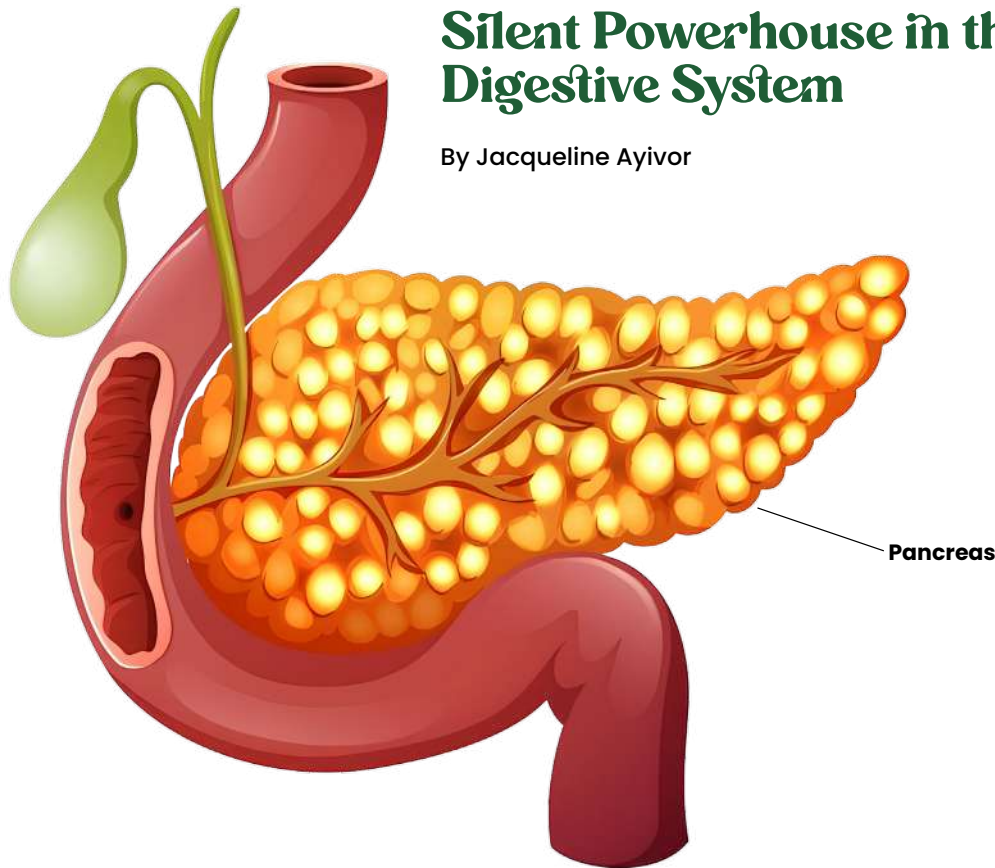
Ultimately, the power of health partnerships like that between West Africa and China lies in their ability to turn ambition into tangible progress. They demonstrate that when nations unite through trust, innovation, and shared purpose, they can create lasting solutions that not only strengthen institutions but also improve the well-being of millions across borders.



The Pancreas:

Silent Powerhouse in the Digestive System

By Jacqueline Ayivor



The pancreas plays a crucial yet often underestimated role in maintaining good health. Think of your pancreas as the body's quiet multitasker — constantly working behind the scenes to keep your digestion and energy levels in perfect harmony. This flat, leaf-shaped gland is part of both the digestive and endocrine systems, working hard every day to regulate blood sugar and break down food yet it often goes unnoticed until something goes wrong.

The pancreas performs two major functions: digestive (exocrine) and hormonal (endocrine). On the digestive side, it produces enzymes that help break down proteins, fats, and carbohydrates in the small intestine. Without these enzymes, our bodies wouldn't be able to absorb nutrients from food, leading to malnutrition and digestive discomfort. On the hormonal side, the pancreas is best known for producing insulin, the hormone that regulates blood sugar levels. It also produces glucagon, which raises blood sugar when it's too low. These two hormones work in balance to keep glucose levels stable a crucial process for energy and overall health. If this system fails, it can lead to serious conditions like diabetes mellitus, a disease affecting millions globally.

Unfortunately, the pancreas is vulnerable to several health problems. Pancreatitis, or inflammation of the pancreas, can be acute or chronic and is often linked to gallstones, alcohol abuse, or infections. More concerning is pancreatic cancer, known for being difficult to detect early and having a high mortality rate. It's often called a "silent killer" because symptoms usually don't appear until

the disease is advanced. Protecting your pancreas starts with a healthy lifestyle. Eating a balanced diet low in processed foods and rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains supports good pancreatic function. Avoiding excessive alcohol and smoking also helps reduce the risk of pancreatic diseases.

As science advances, so does our understanding of this powerful yet delicate organ. Ongoing research into artificial pancreas devices offers hope for better diabetes management, while improved imaging technologies are helping detect pancreatic disorders earlier than ever before. The pancreas may be small, but its impact is mighty. By taking steps to care for it, we're not just supporting digestion and blood sugar we're investing in our long-term health.

HCOWA Association and TAT KA WAI HONG Pharmaceutical Group (Stock Code: 301126)

Signed a Strategic MOU to Establish a Medical Supply Chain and Chinese Medicine Overseas Warehouse in West Africa

In a major step toward strengthening healthcare collaboration between China and West Africa, the Health Community of West Africa (HCOWA) Association signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with TAT KA WAI HONG Pharmaceutical Group (Stock Code: 301126) of China on October 13, 2025, at the HCOWA Association Headquarters, La Trade Fair, Accra. This strategic partnership marked a significant milestone in optimizing and advancing the medical supply model across West Africa while accelerating the development of a resilient pharmaceutical supply chain in the region.

Pharmaceutical products formed a vital part of healthcare services. A robust and efficient

pharmaceutical

supply chain was not merely about the trade of drugs—it involved proactive solutions tailored to local disease patterns and treatment needs.

Through this collaboration, HCOWA and TAT KA WAI HONG jointly established a medical supply chain driven by AI-powered hospital detection, diagnosis, and treatment systems, which improved the management, distribution, and deployment of pharmaceutical products. This integration of artificial intelligence enhanced diagnostic efficiency, streamlined treatment delivery, and strengthened disease prevention outcomes across the region.



About TAT KA WAI HONG Pharmaceutical Group

TAT KA WAI HONG is a modern healthcare conglomerate driven by innovation and full-chain integration. Its business scope spans new drug R&D, biopharmaceutical manufacturing, pharmaceutical distribution, DTP retail pharmacy chains, and specialized reproductive and genetic medicine services.

The Group operates on a 130-acre campus featuring a 70,000 m² warehouse complex. In 2024, it achieved annual revenue of USD 756 million and a pharmaceutical throughput exceeding USD 2 billion, forming a comprehensive industrial ecosystem covering research, production, logistics, and retail.

Wits Intelligent Logistics Center, built with an investment of nearly USD 60 million, features a total construction area of 50,000 m² and integrates smart warehousing hardware with advanced digital management systems. It includes cold storage (2,000+ m³), cool storage, temperature-controlled, and ambient warehouses, enabling fully digitalized, end-to-end management across inbound, storage, and outbound processes.



About HCOWA Association

HCOWA is dedicated to transforming healthcare systems through artificial intelligence and promoting the regionalization and systematization of healthcare in West Africa. Through strategic collaborations with global medical enterprises, HCOWA is spearheading reforms in public and private healthcare, enhancing diagnostic accuracy, improving hospital service delivery, and fostering sustainable medical industry growth across the subregion.

Speaking during the signing ceremony, the President of the HCOWA Association described the partnership as a milestone in the Association's mission to advance healthcare across the continent.

"This MOU laid the foundation for a transformative partnership that connected regional health needs with advanced pharmaceutical solutions," he stated. "It symbolized our collective commitment to strengthening healthcare systems, promoting research collaboration, and improving patient

outcomes throughout West Africa."

Representatives from TAT KA WAI HONG Pharmaceutical Group commended HCOWA's visionary leadership in driving sustainable healthcare transformation.

The partnership, they emphasized, went beyond the overseas circulation of pharmaceutical products—it reflected a shared vision to leverage AI-driven medical big data for the reform and deployment of innovative medicines.

Both parties affirmed their commitment to building an AI-enabled medical supply chain platform that fostered open growth, supported the introduction of high-quality international pharmaceutical products, and promoted localized production in Ghana and across West Africa. This initiative integrated the pharmaceutical strengths of multiple nations to bolster local medicine development, providing a long-term, stable impetus for the region's healthcare and pharmaceutical market growth.



Strength in Sisterhood:

Ghanaian Women Rising Against Breast Cancer

By Larsey Hilda Kai

In communities across Ghana, a quiet revolution in women's health is underway. From urban hospitals to rural markets, Ghanaian women are taking the lead in spreading awareness about breast cancer—one conversation, one screening, and one survivor's story at a time. Their efforts are helping to demystify the disease, promote early detection, and offer hope to those affected. Through advocacy, education, and personal testimony, these women are turning awareness into action and changing the outlook of breast cancer in Ghana.

Across the country, women from various professions, like doctors, nurses, teachers, journalists, and market women, are driving breast health education. Among these trailblazers is Dr. Beatrice Wiafe Addai, founder of Breast Care International (BCI), whose Walk for the Cure and outreach programs promote her life-saving message: "Early detection saves lives." Other women-led groups, such as the Naa Oyoe Breast Cancer Foundation and Safe Haven Cancer Support Center, have reached thousands through free screenings and educational campaigns that demystify the disease and reduce fear.

Survivors have also become influential advocates. Women like Raissa Sambou, who launched a rural campaign in Greater Accra, and Ama Serwaa, who shares her journey through the media, use

their voices to inspire hope and prove that with early detection and treatment, survival is possible. Their courage turns fear into faith and stigma into strength.

At the community level, church fellowships, market associations, and women's groups organize regular education and screening programs. The Air Wives Organization has led nationwide campaigns reaching both urban and rural women, while the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection partners with markets to educate traders on breast health. These grassroots initiatives ensure that even women with limited access to healthcare understand the importance of early detection.

Ghanaian women in the media also play a crucial role. Through radio, television, and social media, figures like Josephine Oppong-Yeboah promote survivor stories, challenge myths, and encourage screening during Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

While challenges such as stigma, fear, and limited screening access remain, continued education, mobile services, and women-led advocacy can change the story. Ghanaian women are not just participants in this fight, they are leaders transforming awareness into empowerment and hope into action.





40 Years of Breast Cancer Awareness Marked by Major Medical Milestones and Lives Saved

In the four decades since the launch of Breast Cancer Awareness initiatives, more than 517,000 lives have been saved thanks to advances in early detection and treatment, according to the American Cancer Society (ACS).

"Today is a day to celebrate forty years of incredible progress in ending cancer as we know it, for everyone," said Dr. Shanti Sivendran, senior vice president of cancer care support at the ACS and a medical oncologist at Penn Medicine, in an interview with ABC News.

The campaign began in October 1985 as a week-long event spearheaded by the ACS and several partner organizations to raise awareness about breast cancer. It gained national attention quickly, culminating in President George H. W. Bush officially declaring October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month in 1990.

What started as a small awareness effort has since grown into a global movement. Each October, millions of people around the world wear pink ribbons, participate in charity walks, and advocate for more research and better screening policies.

The progress is undeniable. According to Dr. Sivendran, two out of three women in the U.S. now receive life-saving mammograms covered by insurance, contributing to a 40% drop in breast cancer mortality rates since the 1980s. At that time, only one in four women were being screened, and access to advanced technology was limited.

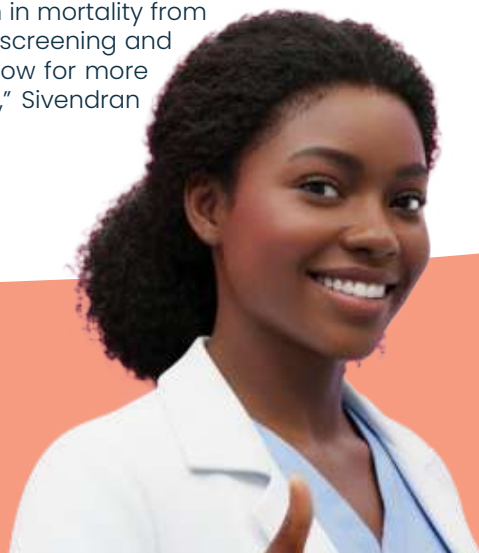
"We've seen a 40% reduction in mortality from breast cancer, from diligent screening and treatment advances that allow for more tailored options for patients," Sivendran noted.

Today, the five-year survival rate for women diagnosed with breast cancer has climbed from approximately 75% in the early 1980s to over 90%. Experts estimate that improved screenings account for about 25% of that drop in deaths, while enhanced treatments make up the remaining 75%.

Significant strides in treatment have also revolutionized care. "We've gone from more invasive surgeries to more targeted radiation and the explosion of new drugs that are specific to different subtypes of breast cancer," said Dr. Katherine Crew, breast medical oncologist and director of the Clinical Breast Cancer Prevention Program at Columbia University Irving Medical Center.

Between 2000 and 2023, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved over two dozen drugs for breast cancer treatment, many designed to target specific biomarkers within tumors. These advancements allow physicians to personalize treatment plans like never before, increasing the chances of positive outcomes.

As the world marks 40 years of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, medical professionals and advocates alike are hopeful that the next decades will bring even greater progress—not only in saving lives, but in preventing breast cancer altogether.



Precision in Pink:

How Technology Is Redefining Breast Cancer Care.

By Larsey Hilda Kai

Technology is transforming how breast cancer is diagnosed and treated, ushering in a new era of personalized care. In the past, treatment approaches were often the same for every patient; however, today, innovations in medical technology are enabling doctors to design therapies tailored to each woman's unique condition. This shift from uniform treatment to individualized care is improving recovery outcomes, minimizing side effects, and saving lives worldwide.

One of the breakthroughs driving this transformation is genomic testing. By studying the genetic makeup of cancer cells, doctors can understand what fuels tumor growth and choose treatments that specifically target those genes. For instance, identifying mutations in genes such as BRCA1 and BRCA2 helps predict a patient's risk and determine whether she will benefit more from chemotherapy, hormone therapy, or targeted drugs. This approach reduces unnecessary treatments and increases the chances of successful recovery.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is also changing the way doctors approach breast cancer care. AI systems can analyze thousands of medical images and patient records to find patterns that humans might miss. These insights help predict how a patient will respond to certain medications or therapies, allowing doctors to adjust treatment plans quickly

and accurately. Machine learning algorithms are even being used to detect early signs of cancer on mammograms, leading to faster diagnosis and earlier intervention when treatment is most effective.

Imaging technology has also seen remarkable improvements. 3D mammography and digital breast tomosynthesis give doctors clearer and more detailed views of breast tissue, enabling surgeons to remove tumors more precisely while preserving healthy tissue. This not only reduces recovery time but also helps women heal both physically and emotionally after surgery.

In Ghana and other developing countries, telemedicine is bridging the gap between patients and specialists. Women can now consult oncologists through digital platforms, receive expert guidance, and even be monitored remotely throughout their treatment journey. This accessibility ensures that location no longer determines the quality of care a woman receives.

Technology is no longer just an aid in breast cancer treatment; it is a partner. Through the power of genetics, AI, and digital care, doctors can now offer treatments as unique as the women they serve. The future of breast cancer care is personal, precise, and powered by technology, giving hope to millions of women worldwide.





West Africa Strengthens Access to Life-Saving Medical Oxygen

Medical oxygen has become a global symbol of survival — a reminder of how essential it is in saving lives every day. Beyond emergency and intensive care, oxygen is critical in treating childhood pneumonia, maternal complications, surgical patients, and infectious diseases such as COVID-19, Lassa fever, and influenza. Yet in many parts of West Africa, access to this life-saving resource remains uneven.

Across Ghana and the subregion, efforts to close this gap have gained momentum in recent years. A major step forward is the Critical Health Regional Medical Oxygen Infrastructure Project, spearheaded by the BKANK Group with support from national governments, development partners, and frontline health workers. The project aims to strengthen

and sustain access to medical oxygen through innovative infrastructure, improved supply systems, and capacity building for local health facilities.

Experts say these interventions are transforming care delivery across the region. Hospitals are now better equipped to handle critical cases, particularly for children and mothers who are most at risk of oxygen deprivation. However, the journey is far from over. Many health facilities still face shortages of oxygen cylinders and concentrators, unreliable supply chains, and a lack of trained biomedical engineers to manage and maintain oxygen systems. Health leaders and partners are calling for long-term investments and stronger regional collaboration to ensure sustainability. Their priorities include developing reliable oxygen production systems, expanding training programs for biomedical professionals, and enacting legislation to formally recognize oxygen as an essential medicine.

With over 400 million people in West Africa depending on fragile health systems, improving oxygen access is not just a medical need — it is a matter of equity and human rights. By investing in sustainable solutions and regional self-sufficiency, stakeholders believe West Africa can reduce preventable deaths and build stronger, more resilient health systems.

Medical oxygen, once seen as a technical issue, has now become a measure of health justice. Ensuring that no patient is denied oxygen when they need it most is one of the region's most urgent calls to action.





Breast Cancer Myths You Should Stop Believing

By Larsey Hilda Kai

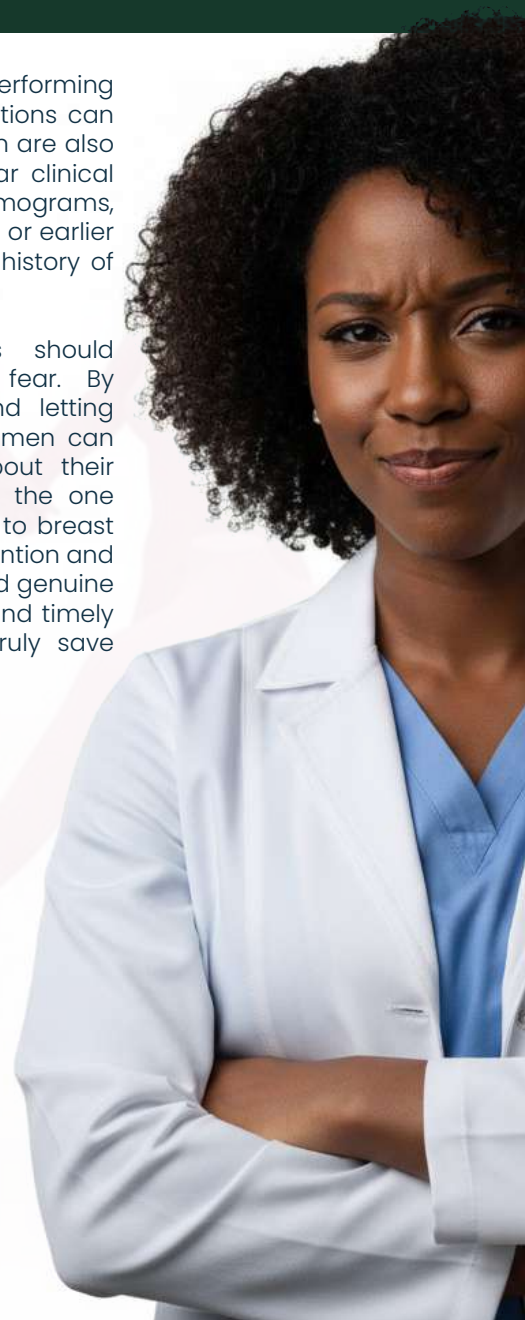
Despite years of awareness campaigns, myths about what causes breast cancer continue to circulate and many women still worry about everyday habits like wearing bras or using deodorant. However, extensive research by medical experts and organizations such as the American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute has found no scientific link between these habits and breast cancer.

This myth likely persists because people often look for simple explanations or controllable causes for complex diseases like cancer. However, breast cancer development is influenced by a combination of genetic, hormonal, and lifestyle factors, not by external habits like wearing certain clothing or using hygiene products. The real risk factors include having a family history of breast cancer, carrying BRCA gene mutations, being overweight, drinking alcohol, limited physical activity, and prolonged exposure to radiation or hormones. Age also plays a significant role, as the risk increases as women grow older.

Rather than worrying about bras or deodorants, it is more important to focus on evidence-based ways to reduce breast cancer risk and detect it early. Maintaining a healthy weight, exercising regularly, eating a balanced diet, avoiding excessive

alcohol consumption, and performing monthly breast self-examinations can all make a difference. Women are also encouraged to go for regular clinical breast screenings and mammograms, especially after the age of 40 or earlier if they have a strong family history of the disease.

Breast cancer awareness should be rooted in facts, not fear. By understanding the truth and letting go of unfounded beliefs, women can make informed choices about their health. Dispelling myths like the one linking bras and deodorants to breast cancer helps ensure that attention and resources are directed toward genuine prevention, early detection, and timely treatment, the steps that truly save lives.



Confronting the Stigma of Breast Cancer

By Larsey Hilda Kai

Cancer continues to affect millions of people worldwide, and while medical treatment has advanced, the emotional and social challenges remain just as significant. Beyond the physical pain, many survivors, especially women who have battled or are recovering from breast cancer, face another battle: overcoming the stigma, fear, and judgment that still surround the disease.

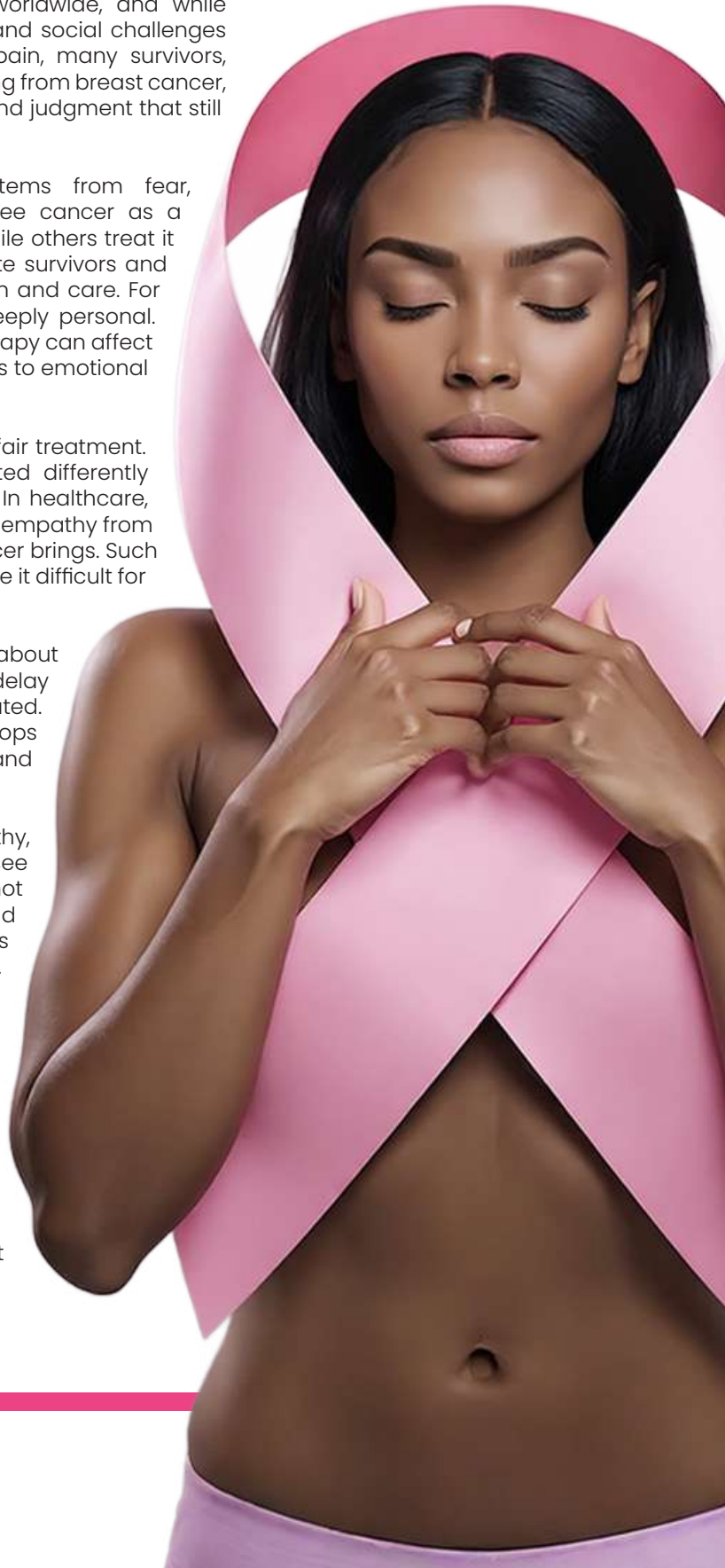
In many societies, stigma around cancer stems from fear, misinformation, and cultural beliefs. Some still see cancer as a death sentence, a punishment, or even a curse, while others treat it as something to hide. These misconceptions isolate survivors and discourage open discussions about early detection and care. For breast cancer survivors, the stigma often feels deeply personal. Changes in appearance after surgery or chemotherapy can affect self-esteem, while pity or exclusion from others adds to emotional pain.

Discrimination happens when stigma turns into unfair treatment. Survivors may be denied job opportunities, treated differently in social spaces, or viewed as weak or incapable. In healthcare, some patients face dismissive attitudes or a lack of empathy from professionals who fail to see the emotional toll cancer brings. Such experiences not only harm confidence but also make it difficult for survivors to fully reintegrate into everyday life.

When fear and stigma silence conversations about cancer, everyone loses. Myths spread, people delay screening, and those in need of help feel isolated. This silence allows misinformation to thrive and stops communities from learning that early detection and treatment can save lives.

Ending cancer stigma starts with awareness, empathy, and open dialogue. Education helps people see cancer for what it truly is, a medical condition and not a curse. Empathy reminds us to offer support instead of judgment, and open conversations give survivors the courage to share their stories and inspire others. Healthcare workers, workplaces, schools, and the media all play a crucial role in changing the narrative and creating a culture of understanding.

It is time to replace fear with compassion and silence with support. Cancer, including breast cancer, does not define a person's strength or value. By showing care, respect, and empathy, we can create a world where survivors feel seen, respected, and celebrated for their courage. Surviving cancer is not just about fighting illness; it is about reclaiming hope, confidence, and life itself.





Why Minimalist Skincare Is the Trend That's Here to Stay

By Jacqueline Ayivor

In 2025, skincare has taken a refreshing turn simplicity, natural ingredients, and skin health have become the core focus of beauty routines around the world. Gone are the days of 10-step routines and harsh chemicals.

Today, people are choosing products and practices that support their skin's natural balance. At the heart of this movement is the "skinimalism" trend a minimalist approach to skincare that emphasizes fewer products with better ingredients. Consumers are becoming more informed and intentional, opting for cleansers, serums, and moisturizers that serve specific purposes without overwhelming the skin.

One of the biggest breakthroughs is the popularity of gentle, multi-tasking ingredients. Niacinamide, hyaluronic acid, and ceramides remain favorites for hydration and skin barrier repair, while ingredients like green tea, aloe vera, and Centella Asiatica offer natural anti-inflammatory benefits. In addition, SPF protection is now seen as essential—not just for sunny days, but as a daily defense against aging and skin damage.

Sustainable and clean skincare has also become a priority. Brands are moving away from harmful additives like parabens and sulfates, and consumers are paying attention to packaging, opting for eco-friendly and refillable options. The rise of vegan and cruelty-free products reflects a broader commitment to both health and ethical values. Skincare is no longer just about appearance it's about skin health and self-care. People are embracing their natural skin tone and texture, focusing on hydration, nourishment, and consistency over perfection.

Personalized skincare based on skin type, lifestyle, and even climate is becoming more accessible through online consultations and smart skincare devices. Skincare in 2025 is all about balance, education, and authenticity. With a focus on natural glow, minimal routines, and healthy habits, individuals are learning to love and care for their skin in smarter, more sustainable ways. Whether it's through gentle cleansing, daily SPF, or simply drinking more water, the future of skincare is clear healthy skin is beautiful skin.



Naomi Mikafui Foundation Promote Early Breast Cancer

“Early Detection, Stronger Together” – A Call to Action

In a powerful demonstration of partnership and purpose, the **Naomi Mikafui Breast Cancer Foundation**, in collaboration with the Health Community of West Africa (HCOWA), hosted the 2nd annual MiPiCon Conference last Friday at BlueCrest University College in Accra, Ghana.

The event — organized with the support of the Women’s Commission of BlueCrest University College, Essence Clinic, Open Labs, and various media partners — brought together health professionals, survivors, caregivers, and advocates under one mission: to raise awareness about breast health and the life-saving importance of early detection.

Promoting Awareness Through Education

Held under the theme “Early Detection, Stronger Together,” the conference opened with an enlightening health talk by Miss Joy E. Bansah, a registered nurse, who spoke on “The Power of Early Detection & Preventive Care.” She discussed common breast cancer risk factors such as gender, age, family history, obesity, alcohol use, and hormonal therapy, while encouraging participants to lead healthier lifestyles, perform regular self-examinations, and promptly seek medical care when they notice unusual changes.

“**Early detection saves lives,**” she reminded the audience, “and breast cancer is not a death sentence when identified and treated early.”

A Shared Commitment to Screening and Support

Adding his voice, Mr. Mensah, Manager of Essence Medical Center, underscored the importance of regular screenings and awareness.

“Cancer isn’t a death sentence, but late detection is,” he said. “The statistics we see every day aren’t just numbers — they represent our mothers, sisters, loved ones, and family members.”

His words reinforced the collective responsibility to increase public awareness and promote accessible breast screening across communities.





and HCO-WA Partner to for Detection at MiPiCon 2025 on for Breast Health Awareness in Ghana”

By Gloria Addo

Stories of Courage and Survival

Beyond the medical insights, MiPiCon 2025 became a platform for stories of resilience. Survivors took to the stage to share deeply personal journeys of fear, faith, and triumph.

Mr. Nartey shared how his wife's diagnosis reshaped their family life, encouraging men to become active supporters in their partners' health journeys.

Mrs. Josephine and Ms. Joy also moved the audience with their testimonies, reflecting on the pain and stigma surrounding cancer treatment — but also the hope, strength, and healing they discovered through faith, family, and strong community support systems.

Screening, Connection, and Hope

The day concluded with a free breast screening exercise, giving participants the opportunity to act on the lessons shared. The event also offered moments for networking, mentorship, and photo sessions — capturing a sense of unity and shared purpose.

For many attendees, MiPiCon 2025 was more than just a conference; it was a reminder that awareness and early action can save lives.

HCOWA's Ongoing Role in Health Advocacy

Through partnerships like this, HCOWA continues to champion regional collaboration in healthcare, empowering organizations and communities to take preventive health seriously.

The success of MiPiCon 2025 underscores HCOWA's broader mission — to strengthen public health systems across West Africa by supporting education, advocacy, and community-driven initiatives that make a tangible difference.

Together with the Naomi Mikafui Foundation and other partners, HCOWA remains committed to fostering a future where early detection, awareness, and compassionate care lead the fight against breast cancer.



**Early detection saves lives and together,
we are stronger.**

Beyond the Pink Ribbon:

How Sonotech is Redefining Breast Cancer Awareness in Ghana

By Gloria Addo

Every October, the world turns pink to remind us of the ongoing fight against breast cancer. Amid the global campaigns and awareness drives, one Ghanaian healthcare facility stands out for its consistent commitment to early detection and patient education — Sonotech Medical and Diagnostic Center.

At Sonotech's Accra branch, Breast Cancer Awareness Month is more than just symbolic ribbons and slogans. It's a mission in motion. In an exclusive conversation, Dr. Grace Backman, Medical Director of Sonotech, shared how a single heartbreaking experience reshaped the center's outlook on breast health and advocacy.

From a Small Facility to a National Leader

Founded in 2012 as a small ultrasound facility in Osu, Sonotech began with a simple but bold mission: to make diagnostic services available at all hours.

"At the time," Dr. Backman recalled, "getting an ultrasound at night or on weekends was nearly impossible. Yet emergencies don't wait. We promised to be available 24/7."

That promise became the foundation for growth. Over 12 years, Sonotech has expanded into a fully equipped medical and diagnostic center with branches in Teshie, West Hills, and Tema. It now offers a broad range of services — from laboratory testing and radiology to advanced imaging like CT scans and MRIs.

A Tragic Turning Point

Sonotech's deeper involvement in breast cancer advocacy began with a moment of loss. "One of our regular patients was rushed in unconscious," Dr. Backman recalled. "We later discovered she had been diagnosed with breast cancer five years earlier but had abandoned treatment. The cancer had spread to her brain."

That experience, she said, was devastating. "I felt we could have done more. If we had asked more questions or created a space for her to talk, maybe things would've been different." It was a turning point. The Sonotech team decided to go beyond diagnosis — to educate, advocate, and ensure no woman suffered in silence again.

Creating Awareness That Saves Lives

Today, Sonotech is one of Ghana's leading advocates for breast cancer awareness. Their campaigns align with the World Health Organization's Global Breast Cancer Initiative, which aims for 60% of cases to be detected at early stages (1 or 2).

"Every person who walks through our doors leaves with some education on breast health," said Dr. Backman. Across Sonotech's branches, educational videos play continuously, while nurses teach patients how to perform self-examinations. Beyond the clinic, the center collaborates with schools, companies, and churches for community outreaches and media discussions.

And it's making a difference. "Ten years ago, only a few people wore pink or talked about screening," she smiled. "Now, survivors share their stories, and organizations host screenings. That's progress."

Breaking Barriers and Misconceptions

Still, challenges persist — from stigma to misinformation. "In the early days, survivors rarely wanted to speak publicly," Dr. Backman noted. "Even men who survived breast cancer stayed quiet. But sharing stories changes perceptions. It gives others courage to act early."

She also lamented the widespread belief in herbal cures and unproven treatments. "It's heartbreaking when people delay medical care because they trust concoctions or prayer camps. Early detection and proper treatment save over 90% of lives."

Financial barriers and uneven access to diagnostic tools are also hurdles. "Some can't even afford discounted screenings," she said. "Others travel long distances because there's no mammogram machine nearby. We need better access."



Faces of Courage: A Celebration of Survivors

This year, Sonotech launched its signature campaign — “Faces of Courage: Stories of Survival.” “In previous years, we’d invite survivors to talk,” Dr. Backman said. “This time, we wanted to celebrate them.” Partnering with local businesses, Sonotech hosted a pamper day — complete with hairstyling, spa sessions, photoshoots, and gifts. “It was emotional,” she said. “They felt seen and appreciated. That’s what awareness should be — healing and hope.”

A Call to Action

“Breast cancer is not a death sentence,” Dr. Backman emphasized. She urges women to perform monthly self-exams, get clinical checks yearly, and schedule mammograms after age 40. For younger women, ultrasound screening is recommended. Her appeal to policymakers is clear: “No woman should have to travel hundreds of kilometers for screening. The government must make diagnostic and treatment facilities accessible across all regions.” As Ghana marks Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Dr. Grace Backman and her team at Sonotech prove that awareness, access, and compassion can change lives.

**Through their dedication,
more Ghanaians are learning
that early detection isn’t just
a slogan — it’s a lifeline.**

**Beyond
the
Pink
Ribbon**



10 Muscle-Building Fundamentals Every Man Should Know

By Gloria Addo

Building muscle isn't just about hitting the gym—it's about understanding how your body grows stronger, responds to training, and recovers. Whether you're a beginner or returning to the weights after a break, mastering the basics can help you train smarter, not harder. Here are ten muscle-building fundamentals every man should know.

1. Consistency Over Intensity

Muscle growth happens over time, not overnight. Showing up regularly—three to five times a week—matters more than one intense session followed by a week off.

2. Master Proper Form

Technique is everything. Proper form prevents injury and ensures you're engaging the right muscles. If you're unsure, get guidance from a trainer before increasing your weights.

3. Progressive Overload Works

To build muscle, you must gradually challenge your body. Add small increments of weight, increase reps, or adjust your tempo to push your limits safely.

4. Prioritize Compound Movements

Exercises like squats, deadlifts, bench presses, and pull-ups work multiple muscle groups at once, helping you gain strength and size efficiently.

5. Nutrition Fuels Growth

Protein is key—aim for lean sources like chicken, fish, eggs, and legumes. Combine with complex carbs, healthy fats, and plenty of water to support recovery and energy.

6. Rest Is Not Laziness

Muscles grow when you rest, not when you lift. Get 7–8 hours of sleep nightly and allow at least 48 hours of recovery between heavy training sessions for the same muscle group.

7. Don't Skip Warm-Ups and Stretching

A proper warm-up boosts circulation and flexibility, reducing injury risk. Cooling down and stretching after workouts aids recovery and mobility.

8. Track Your Progress

Keep a training log or use fitness apps to record your sets, reps, and weight. Tracking helps you stay accountable and visualize your improvement over time.

9. Balance Strength and Cardio

Cardio supports heart health and endurance. A mix of resistance training and moderate cardio ensures balanced fitness without sacrificing muscle gains.

10. Patience Pays Off

Real results take time. Stay disciplined, eat well, and remain patient. Muscle building is a journey of consistency and commitment—not shortcuts.





Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs): The Silent Killers

By Larsey Hilda Kai

NCDs such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and cancers are on the rise, especially in urban areas. Often overlooked, these “silent killers” are now responsible for over 40% of adult deaths in some African countries. Lifestyle factors including poor diet, physical inactivity, and alcohol consumption are major contributors.

One rising concern is breast and cervical cancer among women, with late diagnosis being a major barrier to survival. Screening programs, public awareness campaigns and improved access to treatment are essential in reversing these trends.

Understanding Today’s Health Threats

In 2025, global health systems continue to battle a wide range of diseases some old, some emerging shaping the way nations manage healthcare. From infectious diseases to chronic conditions, understanding the most pressing health threats is crucial to prevention, treatment, and policymaking. In West Africa and beyond, increased urbanization, climate change, and limited healthcare access have added complexity to this fight.

Infectious Diseases: Persistent and Evolving

Despite advancements in medicine, infectious diseases remain a top concern. Malaria, tuberculosis (TB), cholera, and HIV/AIDS still claim thousands of lives annually in West Africa. In recent years, outbreaks like Ebola and Lassa fever have tested the region’s preparedness and response strategies.

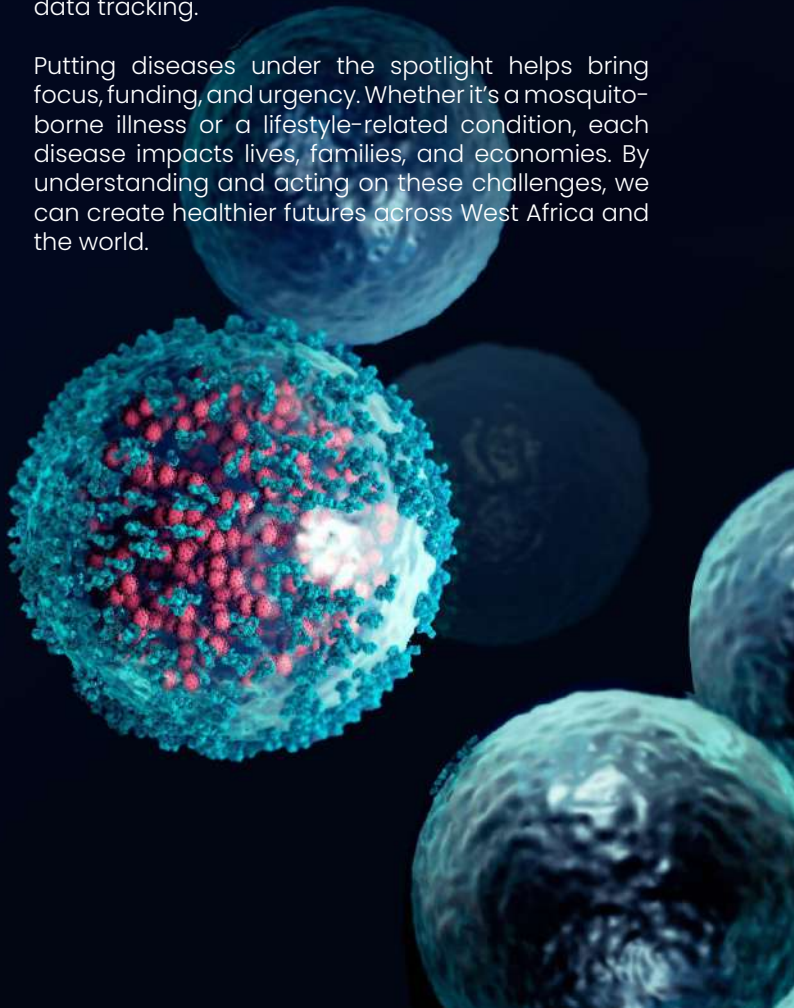
Mental health disorders, once taboo, are slowly gaining attention. Depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and post-traumatic stress affect both young and old. Economic hardship, unemployment, and conflict have all contributed to the region’s growing mental health burden. Sadly, many still suffer in silence due to stigma and limited professional care.

The Way Forward

To combat these health threats, countries must invest in:

- Stronger health systems with trained professionals and modern equipment.
- Health education to promote awareness and prevention.
- Access to care for all, especially in rural communities.
- Technology integration such as telemedicine and data tracking.

Putting diseases under the spotlight helps bring focus, funding, and urgency. Whether it’s a mosquito-borne illness or a lifestyle-related condition, each disease impacts lives, families, and economies. By understanding and acting on these challenges, we can create healthier futures across West Africa and the world.



The Healing Power of a Hug

By Gloria Addo

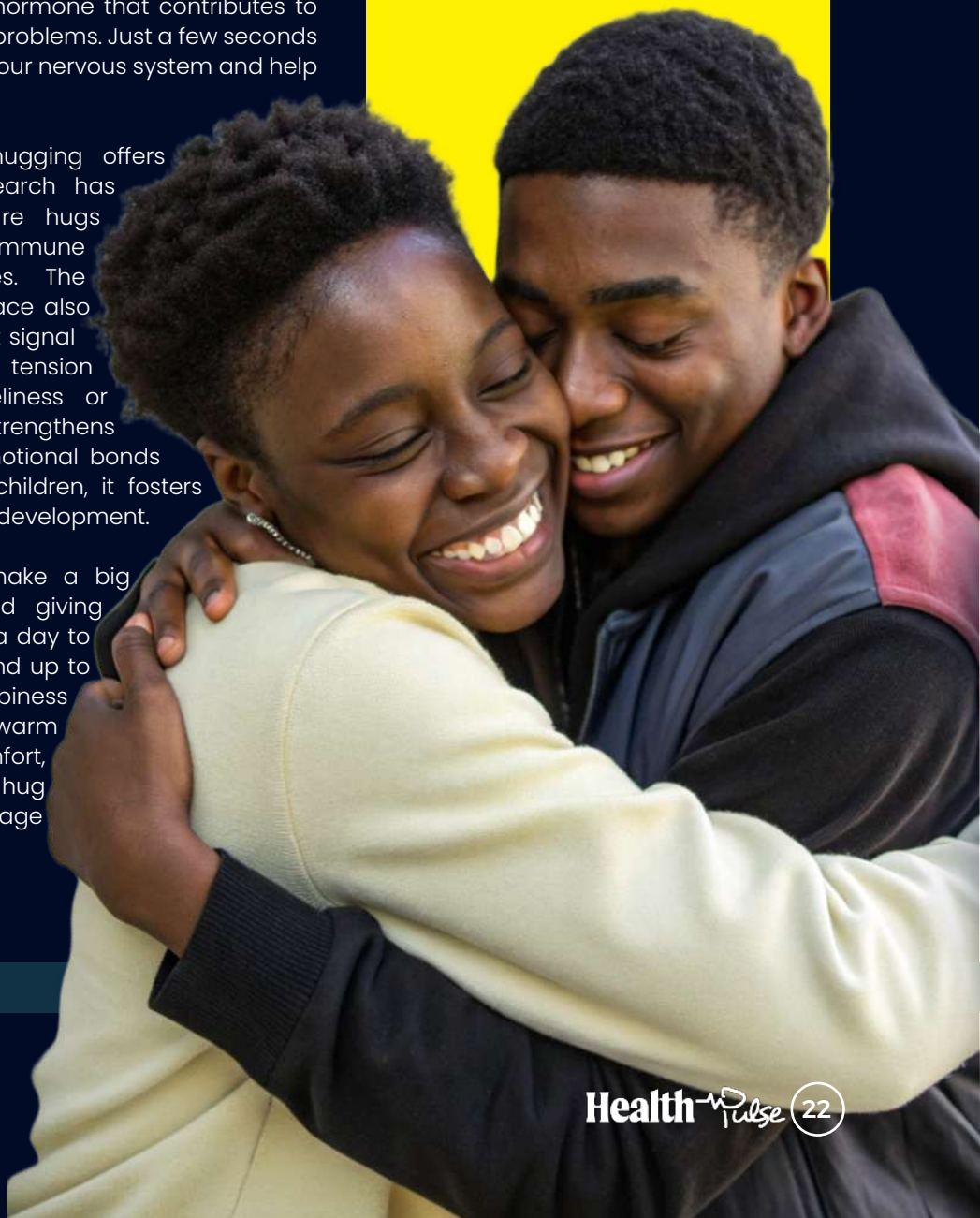
In a world filled with constant stress, deadlines, and digital distractions, something as simple as a hug can work wonders for your health. A genuine embrace—whether from a loved one, a friend, or even a comforting acquaintance—does more than just make you feel good. Science shows that hugs can actually improve both your physical and emotional well-being in powerful ways.

When you hug someone, your body releases oxytocin, often called the “love hormone.” This feel-good chemical helps reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and promote feelings of trust and connection. At the same time, hugs help decrease the level of cortisol, the stress hormone that contributes to anxiety, fatigue, and even heart problems. Just a few seconds of physical affection can calm your nervous system and help you feel centered again.

Beyond emotional comfort, hugging offers tangible health benefits. Research has found that people who share hugs regularly tend to have stronger immune systems and fewer illnesses. The gentle pressure from an embrace also activates nerves in the skin that signal safety to the brain, reducing tension and easing feelings of loneliness or isolation. For couples, hugging strengthens relationships by deepening emotional bonds and increasing empathy. For children, it fosters security and positive emotional development.

Even short, daily hugs can make a big difference. Experts recommend giving or receiving at least four hugs a day to maintain emotional balance, and up to eight or more for optimal happiness and health. Whether it's a warm greeting, a gesture of comfort, or a show of gratitude, each hug communicates care in a language that words can't always express.

So, the next time you reach out for a hug, remember—it's not just affection; it's therapy. Simple, free, and deeply human, a hug might be one of the most powerful health boosters we have.



Smarter Nutrition:

How to Make a Smoothie That Actually Feeds You

By Richeal Elikem Dovia

If you're always on the go but still want to eat healthy, here's one simple recipe hack that can completely change your routine — turn your smoothie into a full, balanced meal.

We all love smoothies for their convenience. They're quick, refreshing, and packed with nutrients — but most smoothies are little more than a sugary drink if they're made with just fruit and juice. The secret to making a smoothie that actually keeps you full and fuels your body lies in adding the right combination of ingredients for protein, fiber, and healthy fats.

Here's how to do it:

- **Start with a base:** Use unsweetened almond milk, oat milk, or Greek yogurt for creaminess and extra protein.
- **Add fruits and greens:** Blend one banana or a handful of berries for natural sweetness, plus a handful of spinach or kale for extra vitamins.
- **Include a protein source:** Add one scoop of protein powder, nut butter, or even cooked oats to give your smoothie staying power.
- **Don't skip healthy fats:** Toss in half an avocado, a tablespoon of chia seeds, or flaxseeds to support brain health and digestion.

- **Boost flavor naturally:** Use cinnamon, cocoa powder, or a dash of vanilla extract instead of sugar or syrups.

Blend everything together, and you've got a delicious smoothie that's not just a snack — it's a complete meal. It can replace breakfast or lunch on a busy day while keeping you energized for hours.

This one simple hack helps you avoid skipping meals or reaching for processed snacks when time is tight. It's also endlessly customizable ingredients based on your mood, dietary needs, or what's already in your fridge.

Healthy eating doesn't have to be complicated. Sometimes, all it takes is one smart recipe tweak to turn an everyday drink into a balanced, nutritious powerhouse.

Try this smoothie hack tomorrow morning — your body (and schedule) will thank you!



Redefining Family Health

By Jacqueline Ayivor

Family health refers to the overall physical, mental, and emotional well-being of all members of a family unit. It involves healthy habits, preventive care, support systems, and access to reliable health information. A healthy family nurtures strong bonds, encourages open communication, and practices wellness together turning health into a shared responsibility.

Key Pillars of Family Health

- **Nutrition:** A balanced diet is crucial. Families that eat home-cooked meals rich in vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins reduce their risk of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. In many West African homes, dishes like jollof rice, okra soup, and yam can be nutritious when prepared with minimal oil and salt.
- **Exercise:** Physical activity isn't just for individuals families can walk together, play games, or do household chores as a team.

It builds connection and keeps everyone fit.

- **Mental Well-being:** Open communication, emotional support, and stress management are vital. Creating safe spaces to talk about feelings or challenges promotes mental wellness and prevents long-term issues.

- **Preventive Care:** Regular check-ups, vaccinations, and early screenings help detect health problems before they become severe. Teaching children about hygiene and routine care sets a strong example.

- **Health Education:** Families that stay informed about diseases, reproductive health, and lifestyle risks make better choices. In West Africa, outreach programs and radio health segments are helping spread such awareness.

Challenges in West Africa

Despite cultural emphasis on family, many households face barriers like limited access to healthcare, poverty, and lack of education. Diseases like malaria, cholera, and malnutrition still affect families in underserved areas. Addressing these issues requires both community action and government support.

In 2025, the rise of mobile clinics, health insurance schemes, and telemedicine is helping families access care more easily. But the change must also start at home.

Parents and guardians are role models what they eat, how they manage stress, and the health decisions they make shape the next generation. Family health is not about perfection it's about intention and consistency. Whether it's cooking healthy meals, going for evening walks, or checking in on each other's mental health, small actions create lasting impact.

A healthy family builds a healthy future one choice at a time.



HCOWA and Greenfield School of Medicine Teaching Hospital Signed Landmark MOU to Establish AI-Powered Medical Facility in Sunyani

By Gloria Addo

In pursuit of its mission to advance healthcare in Ghana and across West Africa, the Health Community of West Africa (HCOWA) on October 16, 2025, signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Greenfield School of Medicine Teaching Hospital for the design, construction, and operation of an AI-powered teaching hospital in Sunyani, Bono Region. The signing ceremony took place at the HCOWA Headquarters, located in Accra-Ghana.

This strategic partnership marked a major milestone in integrating artificial intelligence into healthcare systems across the subregion. The new facility will serve as a center of excellence for diagnosis, treatment, education, and research—ushering in a new era of technologically enhanced healthcare delivery. Through this collaboration, HCOWA and Greenfield School of Medicine aim to improve efficiency, accuracy, and quality in medical care while positioning Sunyani as a leading hub for healthcare innovation in Ghana.

The AI-Powered Greenfield School of Medicine Teaching Hospital is envisioned to provide advanced diagnostic and treatment services to the people of Sunyani and the wider Bono Region. It will function as a modern teaching and research institution that supports medical education, professional training, and continuous innovation. The integration of AI-driven systems will enhance patient management, diagnostic imaging, and clinical decision-making, ensuring that healthcare professionals deliver faster and more precise care.





The collaboration also seeks to promote international partnerships in medical education and research through engagement with universities, research institutions, and Chinese medical experts. Both parties reaffirmed their dedication to ensuring sustainable management, adequate funding, and effective governance of the hospital to guarantee long-term impact and operational excellence.

The facility will comprise a wide range of specialized departments, including General Outpatient and Preventive Care, Internal Medicine and Specialist Consultation, an AI-Enhanced Diagnostic Centre encompassing Laboratory, Pathology, Radiology, and Genetic Testing services, as well as Dialysis, Ophthalmology, and Reproductive Health departments. It will further include a Pharmacy Department dedicated to dispensing and pharmaceutical research, a Medical Training and Simulation Centre integrated with the Greenfield School of Medicine, and an AI Research and Data Science Department focused on driving innovation in healthcare technology.

The signing of this MOU underscored HCOWA's unwavering commitment to building stronger, smarter, and more sustainable healthcare systems across West Africa. The establishment of the AI-powered Greenfield School of Medicine Teaching Hospital represents a visionary step toward transforming medical education, research, and healthcare delivery in Ghana—setting a new benchmark for modern healthcare advancement in the region.

Building a Healthier You with the Right Supplements

By Richeal Elikem Dovia

Living a healthy lifestyle goes beyond eating right and staying active; it's also about giving your body the nutrients it needs to function at its best. In today's busy world, even with balanced meals, it's not always easy to meet all nutritional requirements. That's where dietary supplements can play an important supporting role.

Supplements — including vitamins, minerals, and herbal blends — help fill nutritional gaps and maintain the body's essential functions. Vitamins such as A, C, D, and E boost immunity and skin health, while minerals like calcium, iron, and magnesium strengthen bones, support muscle activity, and promote heart function. For people with dietary restrictions, pregnancy, or certain health conditions, supplements can be especially beneficial.

However, the key to supplement intake lies in balance and awareness. More isn't always better. Taking excessive amounts of some nutrients, such as iron or Vitamin A, can lead to side effects or toxicity. That's why it's essential to understand your body's specific needs. Consulting a healthcare professional before starting any supplement

routine helps ensure safety and effectiveness.

In addition, supplements should complement — not replace — real food. Whole foods provide fiber, antioxidants, and other compounds that pills and powders can't fully replicate. A colorful plate filled with fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains remains the foundation of good nutrition. Supplements simply enhance what's already there.

To get the best results, consistency is key. Take supplements at the recommended dosage and time of day. Pairing certain nutrients, like calcium with Vitamin D or iron with Vitamin C, can improve absorption. Staying hydrated and maintaining an active lifestyle also help your body utilize nutrients efficiently.

Healthy living is about creating harmony — balancing diet, exercise, rest, and supplementation. When used wisely, supplements can boost vitality, strengthen immunity, and fill nutritional gaps, helping you live a more energetic and resilient life every day.

Take the first step today

Talk to your healthcare provider, discover what your body truly needs, and make supplements a smart part of your daily wellness routine.



A Midwife's Insight

Essential Must-Knows on Breast Cancer

With Mrs. Gogovi-Gbekle, Midwife at Biodun Maternity



Breast cancer remains one of the most pressing health concerns for women worldwide, and Ghana is no exception. Yet, despite increasing awareness, many women still struggle with questions about prevention, early detection, and care. In this edition of Ask the Expert, Health Pulse Magazine speaks with Mrs. Gogovi-Gbekle, a seasoned midwife whose work goes beyond maternal care to women's health advocacy. She shares her expert insight on what every woman should know about breast cancer — from early warning signs to myths, risk factors, and practical prevention.

Q1: Early Detection — As a midwife, what advice do you give women on how to perform effective breast self-examinations?

A: Every woman should make it a habit to know her breasts. I advise women to regularly examine their breasts, checking for any fluid discharge, swelling, or unusual lumps. It's important to palpate — feel the breast tissue with your fingers — and report anything different to a health professional. Don't wait for pain or discomfort before checking; early detection saves lives.

Q2: Can breast cancer occur during pregnancy, and what unique challenges does it present for both mother and baby?

A: Yes, breast cancer can occur during pregnancy. Interestingly, pregnancy sometimes makes it easier to detect because women tend to notice changes in their breasts more closely. However, it presents challenges since both the baby's safety and the mother's treatment have to be considered. That's why regular medical checkups during pregnancy are so important.

Q3: Does breastfeeding really lower a woman's risk of developing breast cancer, and if so, how?

A: Yes, breastfeeding offers protection. Women who have their first child between 18 and 23 years and breastfeed for longer periods reduce their risk of developing breast cancer. Breastfeeding helps regulate hormones and limits prolonged exposure to estrogen — one of the hormones linked to breast cancer.

Q4: What are the most common early signs of breast cancer that women should never ignore?

A: Pain in the breast, unusual enlargement, nipple discharge, or the presence of a lump — whether painful or not — are warning signs. Some women believe that if there's no pain, it's not serious, but many breast cancers are painless at first. Any unusual change should be examined by a professional.

Q5: We often think of breast cancer as affecting older women. Should women under 40 also be concerned?

A: Absolutely. Younger women are not exempt. Delayed diagnosis is more common among women under 40 because they are not routinely screened, and symptoms may be overlooked. Every woman, regardless of age, should know what's normal for her body and seek help when something changes.

Q7: How do midwives contribute to breast cancer awareness and support for women in primary healthcare settings?

A: Midwives play a crucial role. We are often the first health professionals women confide in, especially in rural communities. Through health talks, counseling sessions, and even radio programs, we educate women on breast health, self-examination, and when to seek medical attention. Our role is both preventive and supportive.

Q6: In your experience, are there misconceptions in our communities that prevent women from seeking early diagnosis or treatment?

A: Yes, several. Some people still believe breast cancer is caused by curses or spiritual forces. Others think that if a lump isn't painful, it's harmless. These misconceptions delay diagnosis and treatment. Community education and open conversations are key to breaking these myths.

Q8: What simple, everyday steps can women take to protect their breast health?

A: Avoid applying herbs or unverified creams to the breasts, and limit exposure to harmful substances. Eat well, exercise regularly, and go for medical checkups. Awareness and prevention are the best defenses against breast cancer.

Final Word

Mrs. Gogovi-Gbekle's message is simple but powerful — awareness, early detection, and education save lives. Midwives continue to play a critical role in helping women take control of their breast health through consistent guidance, community engagement, and compassionate care.



Health Terms On Breast Cancer

Architectural Distortion

A finding on a mammogram that describes an abnormal (distorted) shape or pattern of breast tissue, but no mass is seen. Although the breast tissue may be normal, this finding usually needs follow-up testing because it may be a sign of a benign (not cancer) breast condition or breast cancer.

Antioxidant

A substance that protects the body against damage from oxidizing agents. Oxidizing agents are always present in the body and are often beneficial. However, when large amounts of oxidants are present in cells, they can cause damage, especially to DNA. This can lead to abnormal cell growth. Antioxidants include beta-carotene, vitamin A, vitamin C and vitamin E.

Benign Breast Conditions (Benign Breast Disease)

Noncancerous conditions of the breast that can result in lumps or other abnormalities. Examples include cysts and fibroadenomas.

Chemotherapy

A drug or combination of drugs that kills cancer cells.

Clinical Breast Examination (CBE)

A physical exam done by a health care provider to check the look and feel of the breasts and underarm for any changes or abnormalities (such as lumps).

Ductal Carcinoma in Situ (DCIS, Intraductal Carcinoma)

A non-invasive breast cancer that begins in the milk ducts of the breast, but has not invaded nearby breast tissue. Also called stage 0 or pre-invasive breast carcinoma.

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