THE FUTURE OF HEALTH IS HERE

Philips, in collaboration with FORBES AFRICA, hosted the 2019 Future of Health Summit bringing together thought leaders and key stakeholders in the health and medical sector, to explore the exciting future of healthcare in Johannesburg, South Africa.

With just over two months to go to 2020, heralding a new decade, the Future of Health Summit explored current healthcare challenges, and how these can be overcome using technology and innovation, whilst painting a bold future-focused picture of healthcare.

Guiding the future-focused conversations on the day were Alexander Leibner, joined by CNBC Africa's Chris Bishop and Pifi Peters, who moderated some of the dynamic panel discussions on, amongst others, TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION ENABLING HEALTHCARE.

This year, acclaimed global futurist, speaker, and best-selling author, Jack Ulrich from the United States, returned to answer the question: “What will the future of healthcare look like?” Ulrich delivered a global and regional perspective on technological advancements in his highly anticipated keynote.

Ulrich identified trends he saw emerging in Africa as continued advances in artificial intelligence, blockchain technology, data analytics, gene sequencing technology and 3-D printing robotic technology. These trends were all already happening in Africa, but would develop exponentially in the years ahead.

“Continued advances in artificial intelligence can help us diagnose diseases faster, so that may be able to get some of the workload off nurses and doctors faster,” he said. “The continued advances in our understanding of how to leverage data is going to be phenomenal. So maybe one of the opportunities for Africa is going to be in training more people in the field of data analytics to say: ‘How do we make more sense of this data? How do we get engaged in preventative healthcare information and how do we get out in front of these diseases before they actually become diseases? So we just have to start thinking about the future of healthcare differently.”

Audiences also got first-hand insight into the latest Future Health Index (FHI), a research-based platform designed to help determine the readiness of countries to address global health challenges and build sustainable, fit-for-purpose national health systems. By examining the role of technology in the health system, the aim of the FHI is to provide actionable insights to healthcare professionals, governments and patients that will also improve their experience with healthcare.

Some of this year’s discussions included panel discussions on THE FIRST 1000 DAYS AND MATERNAL HEALTH as well as LIFESTYLE DISEASES – A TICKING TIME-BOMB. Attendees also got first-hand insight by Dr Jonathan Louw, CEO of SA National Blood Services on the organisation’s plans for blood delivery by drone, along with other fascinating discussions on the impact of AI on healthcare, the Internet of Things, use of Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality, Telehealth, Robotics, Health-Tracking and 3D Printing.

Jasper Westerink, CEO of Philips Africa, said: “Philips has a lot of technology and a lot of innovation, and I think what I’m very proud of is one of the products that we discussed today, which is Lumifly, which is an ultra-portable ultra-sound that you can carry around, it is just a probe, and it means you can go into the field at point of care and use it. And what is so unique about this solution is that you can actually have a live video connection with a specialist. So a healthcare worker in some rural area can connect with a specialist, maybe in Johannesburg, maybe even in the US, to get a second opinion or to get support. And I think these are the technologies that we really need in Africa, where mortality rates for birth, mother and child, are still way, way too high.”

Building on previous years, the gathering unpacked an array of current topics and forthcoming technological advancements in the healthcare space, that could solve major challenges and change healthcare for the better.

The 2019 Future of Health Summit was produced by ABIN Event Productions.