AI's role in imaging and diagnostics: Insights abound as Africa Health Congress 2023 kicks off

In the realm of radiology, despite strides made in education and training at the systemic level, the shortage of human resources remains a pressing concern. For instance, the radiologist-to-population ratio in Kenya stands at one for every 389,255 people, while in Nigeria, the ratio is even lower, with only one radiologist per 566,000 people in the population.
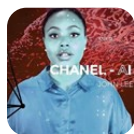

Source: Pexels

Groundbreaking technological and digital advancements - including the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) machine learning (ML) and deep learning - are ushering in opportunities to alleviate the burden on healthcare systems.

This is critically important in the African context and the global South, where infrastructural and human-resource limitations often stymie progress – especially in the realms of radiology, as well as other subfields of imaging and diagnostics.

Healthtech has been identified as a high-growth sector where African startups like Envisionit, who recently secured a $1.65m investment are pioneering transformative solutions.

Now in its 12th year – one of the Africa Health Congress' longest-running annual events - the imaging and diagnostics conference has become a seminal platform for field leaders, and a flagship industry platform where novel technologies and medical solutions are both presented and rigorously discussed, as well as a networking and knowledge sharing space for radiologists, nuclear medicine physicians, sonographers, radio pharmacists, technicians, nurses and facility directors.

In his compelling address entitled *The Role of AI and Other Advanced Technologies in the Future of Imaging*, Andre du Plessis – director of Scholtz and Partners Diagnostic Radiologists – will delve into the history and background of AI in imaging.

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AI-driven methods have long been employed to delegate tasks, streamline workflows, and offer highly tailored reading lists to help guide radiologists toward more accurate diagnoses, he said.

The landscape is further evolving with the advent of increasingly sophisticated machine-learning and deep-learning models.

For patients, AI-augmented automated image triage systems – already *de rigueur* in many larger clinical and hospital facility settings – ensure that urgent cases receive the timely care they require.

AI: Augmentation, not replacement

In other industries, AI's use in medical settings has been a topic of contention. And, as is in various other sectors, AI is not expected to supplant medical professionals, but rather to augment their capabilities.

This means each specialist can potentially treat more patients, with better outcomes at scale, while hopefully also ameliorating the pervasive issue of professional burnout.

The Africa Health Congress remains at the vanguard of these crucial dialogues. Alongside the Imaging and Diagnostics Conference, the first day of the event also sees the kick-off of both the 5th Medical Obstetrics Conference and the Public Health Conference, now in its seventh year running.

Join us tomorrow at Gallagher Estate in Johannesburg where experts will reconvene for day two of the Imaging and Diagnostics conference, in which attendees can look forward to sessions on oncology, strokes, Computed Tomography (CT) and Positron Emission Tomography (PET)-based imaging, as well as Radionuclide Therapy, Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging (NMMI) emergency medicine, and the role of AI in NMMI.

Also kicking off on day two of the African Health Congress 2023 is the Sterilisation & Decontamination Conference, the BioMedicine & Clinical Engineering Conference, and the much-anticipated inaugural edition of the Africa Health Indaba.

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