

# CONSAMS 2024: Uniting African Medical Schools for a Healthier Tomorrow

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The University of Namibia recently hosted the pivotal 11<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Consortium of New Sub-Sahara African Medical Schools (CONSAMS) from 25 – 28 February 2024, in Windhoek. This significant event marked the first in-person gathering of CONSAMS members post-COVID-19, underlining the consortium's commitment to fostering collaboration among new medical schools across the continent.



Founded in 2011, CONSAMS began as a visionary network of 5 Southern African medical schools and 2 northern partners (Vanderbilt University and Oulu University), aiming to share innovative curricula, training programmes, and research projects. This initiative expanded in 2017 to embrace new medical institutions across Sub-Saharan Africa, growing into a robust consortium that now includes over 130 schools. The consortium's growth reflects a collective response to the Lancet 2010 Report, which highlighted the transformative potential of collaborative networks in healthcare education.

The conference in Windhoek was a testament to CONSAMS's resilience and adaptability, especially in the face of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, CONSAMS schools demonstrated remarkable innovation by adopting virtual

learning platforms and e-learning solutions, ensuring uninterrupted medical education, and training. This year's conference, themed "CONSAMS Reboot" and proudly sponsored by Bayer Crop Science, focused on reigniting in-person collaboration, sharing best practices, and exploring new opportunities for growth and development.

Delegates from 16 countries around the world, including Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, gathered to share their experiences, challenges, and successes. The conference agenda was rich and varied, featuring discussions on medical education, one-health initiatives, medical toxicology, and digital innovation in healthcare training. The event also provided a platform for member schools to present their progress and explore collaborative initiatives in medical education and research.

### **South-to-South partnerships: Cornerstone of success**

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The presence of international representatives, including partners from Finland and the USA, underscored CONSAMS's commitment to global collaboration and knowledge exchange. The consortium's emphasis on south-to-south partnerships, with northern partners facilitating project development, has been a cornerstone of its success.

Keynote speakers, including Dr. Denis Regnier from the University of Global Health Equity, Rwanda, highlighted the importance of contextualizing medical education to meet the specific needs of Sub-Saharan Africa. The conference also addressed the critical need for sustainable funding and support to continue the consortium's mission of improving healthcare education and outcomes across the continent.

Dr. Felicia Christians, President CONSAMS, who is also the Associate Dean: School of Medicine, UNAM, said: "Through unity, innovation, and shared knowledge, CONSAMS is shaping the future of medical education in Africa, fostering a generation of healthcare professionals equipped to meet the continent's unique challenges."



As CONSAMS moves forward, its focus remains on fostering innovation, collaboration, and a shared vision for enhancing medical education in Africa. The consortium's legacy, as demonstrated at the Windhoek conference, is a beacon of hope and a testament to the power of collective action in addressing the healthcare challenges of our time.