

ASLM and Illumina: Genomics empowers Africa's pandemic readiness

During the 6th Biennial ASLM2023 conference in Cape Town, South Africa, the African Society for Laboratory Medicine (ASLM) and Illumina, specialising in sequencing technology, formally established a Memorandum of Understanding.



Source: Supplied. Nqobile Ndlovu, chief executive officer of ASLM and Tom Berkovits, senior director of Illumina Africa Middle East and Asia-Pacific during the MoU signing between The African Society for Laboratory Medicine and Illumina at the 6th Biennial ASLM2023 conference in Cape Town.

This initiative is designed to expand the use of genomics in Africa to prepare for future pandemics and safeguard the health of Africans.

To fortify Africa's resilience against future pandemics, this collaborative initiative aims to harness the power of genomics to enhance disease surveillance, outbreak response, and public-health interventions across the continent.

Additionally, the initiative is expected to boost local training in genomics and increase access to sequencing technology through a specialised genomics curriculum provided by means of ASLM's training platform, the ASLM Academy.

Furthermore, ASLM will become part of the Illumina Global Health Access Initiative, extending access to pathogen genomic sequencing for public health in low- and middle-income countries.

“Creating opportunities for genomics training within Africa is vital for building local capacities. Genomic sequencing is

crucial for identifying and managing pathogens, and through this collaboration with Illumina, we aim to empower a skilled workforce that can conduct genomic sequencing domestically,” said Nqobile Ndlovu, chief executive officer of ASLM.

Illumina’s recently launched Global Health Access Program will play a pivotal role in this initiative by offering reduced pricing for eligible sequencing products.

“ This morning's Early Breakfast Show was a highlight with Mr [@MrNqobileNdlovu](#), CEO of ASLM who spoke to Africa Melane on Cape Talk & 702, featuring insights from [#ASLM2023](#). A truly enlightening discussion! Click on the link below for more! <https://t.co/Lnk2OeexcZ>— ASLM (@ASLM_News) [December 13, 2023](#)”

This programme, developed with guidance from customers, funders, and market facilitators including the non-profit Find, will provide reduced pricing structures for eligible sequencing products from Illumina to qualified global health funding entities and address key international logistics and supply chain challenges.

Tom Berkovits, senior director Asia Pacific, Middle East & Africa (AMEA) Illumina, highlighted, “Genomic sequencing significantly contributes to detecting and responding to infectious disease outbreaks.

“The Global Health Access Program, with ASLM’s valuable participation, addresses challenges such as delayed response times and increased costs associated with shipping samples offshore.”

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