



THE COVID YEAR

Reflections from Ryculture Operational
Research Taskforce

We Are Social

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Executive Summary

Ryiculture Health and Social Innovation is a forward-looking socially conscious social enterprise committed to improving access to healthcare and promoting wellbeing for all sustainably.

We believe that every individual has a right to lead a healthy and productive life and we strive to make it a reality through health research, health advocacy, health communication, health systems strengthening and human capacity development.

Mission: To build sustainable healthy and prosperous societies by nurturing competent and socially responsible individuals and building resilient, sustainable health systems.

Vision: A healthy, socially responsible and prosperous society.

Core Values: Humanity, Integrity, Professionalism, Client Value Creation and Team Work

Slogan: Redefining culture for health and prosperity.

Background

In December 2019, a novel disease was reported in Wuhan, China. This was established to be caused by a virus of the coronavirus family. With rapid spread, the first case in Kenya was reported on 13th March 2020 after which as a nation the emergency response and containment measures were instituted from the national government through the Ministry of Health (MoH) down to the individual level.

With the outbreak, there was a need to pivot our operations and being a medical emergency, it was upon us to act and act with agility. In line with our commitment to nurture young people to be competent, socially responsible and civically active individuals we established the Ryculture Operational Research Taskforce. This was aimed at providing pharmacy students and recent graduates an opportunity to contribute to the fight against COVID-19 through scientific review, analysis and synthesis of sound guidance on the different interventions that were being floated in response to COVID-19. This spanned scientific, clinical and operational component of health systems. The members of the taskforce reviewed diligently developed and curated topics with a basis for engagement in the fight against COVID-19. The reports were distributed through various platforms including our website, social media platforms and different forums such as during the Pharmaceutical Society of Kenya (PSK) Scientific Symposium and COVID-19 Dialogues.

In the course of the project, we realized a need for life skill sessions and peer-mentorship which was integrated into our offering even as we refocus our research in the midst of COVID-19 information overload.

This publication is a summary of the experiences and reflections of some members of the taskforce.

Message from the Directors

It is our utmost pleasure and honor to work with such an amazing team as part of the Operational Research Taskforce. It's with joy that we pen this message down and hope it creates a spark in our minds as hearts to be able to create value in whichever places we are, support one another and nurture socially responsible societies.

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) came and on the backdrop of this, we were thrown aback as the year had just started with high hopes for what possibilities did lie ahead of us. These didn't matter when an invisible enemy set camp at our doorsteps. Staying at home, social distancing and hand washing were and are still the most acclaimed interventions against this disease. With disruptions, our social networks were disrupted, learning had to stop and while all these were happening our hopes, dreams and aspirations were still intact: a healthy, socially responsible and prosperous society being the ultimate end.

Establishing this taskforce is one of the greatest decision we have made this year. By offering young people a platform to contribute to the fight against COVID-19, we've created a system for us to continue learning with others, nurture relationships and most importantly discuss pertinent issues that affect our daily lives.

Contributing in the taskforce is always an honor and knowing that we have a generation of young people keen on making a difference is heartwarming. As we share this, it's our hope that it will inspire you to provide young people with a platform to manifest their ingenuity, learn and most importantly shape our future. Thank you.



Dr Veronica Njambi Kihugi
Pharmacist

I am Veronica Njambi Kihugi, a Pharmacist due to start my internship. I am passionate about service, leadership and quality healthcare delivery. I never had this passion for healthcare before but through life I have learnt that without good health, nothing else goes on. Everyone wants to be well physically, emotionally, mentally and socially. Health to me is all that in one package. I feel that COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that in a very big way.

I joined Ryculture in January 2020. It was a group I had always wanted to be part of, to work with others to ensure everyone gets this health package.

The COVID-19 pandemic for me was a period of great impact in my life, both positive and negative. COVID-19 came at a time when I had so many life plans and some were affected in a huge way. It is in this period that I felt depressed as everything seemed to be at a standstill. No more school, work, church, socializing and everything else. Fear would creep up daily when the national briefings were made.

I was to finish my studies and graduate in June this year. COVID-19 has changed all that. It was not easy to face this difficult reality. I had made so many plans and dreams that were affected. Life became difficult and it was also sad to know there were people who could no longer afford their daily meals. There was little anyone could do since we had to take caution and reduce the spread of the disease.

This period taught me so much. It reminded me of the importance of life and of others. It taught me that living and breathing is in the hands of our creator. Health as a package, which we have neglected sometimes became the main factor. I learnt new skills and rethought life, goals and ambitions. I can positively say that I became a better person despite the pandemic.

It was during the COVID-19 period that the Ryculture Research Taskforce was formed. A team of individuals focused on health as a package and research to actually fill gaps in this package.

Being part of the team has been my highlight for this year. I was able to refine my research skills by participating in writing papers regarding several topics about COVID-19. The most important aspects in the team were the life lessons and teamwork. Every week we discuss social and life skills that would benefit us and health system. There's always a chance to learn and to express oneself. The group has helped me re-imagine and find life as what we make it to be by who we are rather than what it makes us to be. The lessons from our numerous meetings are not the kind you get from class. The team is composed of a group of friends who have become my great cheerleaders and supporters.

We have learnt how to write motivational letters, how to be ready for the workplace, relationships, communication, and health system issues. The leadership and guidance in the research taskforce has been great and I am really proud that I am part of the team.

Every person interested in research in health as a package should be part of such a team. You not only learn how to research but also how to be a life leader at work, education and in your social life. We love new members because everyone has something to offer and that we can learn from.

Our health systems have improved over time including in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. However there still exists gaps in healthcare delivery, equity and ethics in medicine. These affect progress being made towards universal healthcare coverage (UHC). It is upon us as current and future healthcare workers to change things to enable everyone to achieve health as a package in the right way. I intend to enhance my knowledge to become a part of this change.

“The group has helped me reimagine and find life as what we make it to be by who we are rather than what it makes us to be.”

- Dr Veronica Njambi



Kassim Sabwa

**Bachelor of Pharmacy
Student, KeMU**

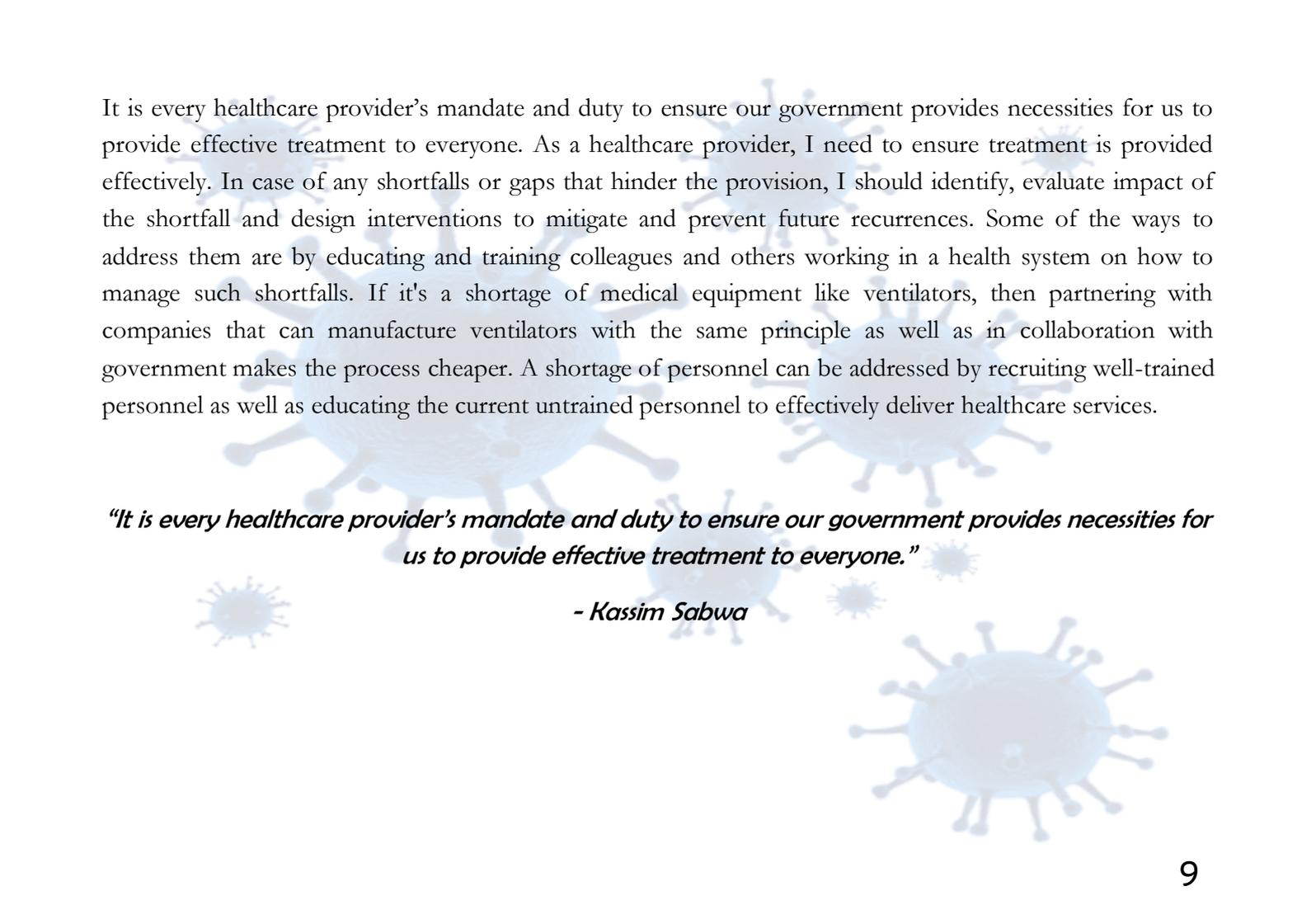
Since the beginning of the dissemination of COVID-19 in Kenya, this crisis has fundamentally changed my personal life unexpectedly. It started with apprehension and fear that I might be a victim or one of my loved ones might be a victim of COVID-19, with the way cases were surging up daily, people dying and some hospitalized in critical conditions. It wasn't an easy path to take. Thanks to many who gave me hope that by following the measures put forth by the Ministry of Health and World Health Organization (WHO) I'd be safe from the infection. It was a learning journey that inspired and made me help others. This is why I am writing this reflection on what I have been through and the experiences I've got with Ryculture COVID-19 Research Taskforce. As I pen this, I am glad that I am still safe and many of my close ones as well.

As a student, pursuing a Bachelor of Pharmacy Level 4, the COVID-19 crisis affected my studies because adapting virtual learning wasn't easy, luckily with time I got used to and it's a good chance for me. I have been able to access several trainings about the healthcare system and related areas from global sources. This is something that I couldn't have had an opportunity to experience if I was still on campus. I am glad that I have found a way to broaden my academic journey by not only focusing on classwork but exploring trends and experiences worldwide. By attending online workshops, webinars, online training, and being part of the COVID-19 Research Taskforce with Ryculture Health and Social Innovation, I have been greatly equipped academically. I look forward to learning and share my knowledge with others.

Honestly speaking, before joining Ryculture COVID-19 Research Taskforce, I only knew a little about research development. I am now well conversant with research. I would like to thank and appreciate Dr. David Odhiambo for the initiative and good work he has done in guiding me and the rest of the team in research training and practice. I have learned how to understand and interpret published work, determine an area of interest and how to work on it individually, developing a positive outlook on any health issue, how to write the different types of reviews, how to collect data reviews from published articles and many more. The research docket is very wide. As this is my interest area, I still look forward to learning more about research and be part of great research teams in the future.

As a healthcare student who haven't had an opportunity to join such a taskforce, I would encourage you not to miss being part of such opportunities in the future. A lot is being shared and there is a lot you'll learn only if you take part in and attend such initiatives. Not only taskforces but also other research training forums and workshops. Research is applied in all departments of academics therefore its everyone's need to learn about it to sharpen and improve your work experience.

Kenya has been among the countries punching below its weight in terms of ensuring a good health system. There are several challenges that I have had to acknowledge through the taskforce such as shortage of healthcare workers, lack of medical supplies including Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs), few hospitals and limited bed capacity, lack of preparedness for disease outbreaks among others. Our healthcare system can perform better with action on such identified gaps effectively and collaboratively to achieve Universal Health Coverage for everyone.

The background of the slide features several stylized, light blue virus particles. These particles are spherical with numerous small, protruding spikes or appendages, resembling coronaviruses. They are scattered across the page, with some appearing larger and more prominent than others, creating a subtle, thematic backdrop for the text.

It is every healthcare provider's mandate and duty to ensure our government provides necessities for us to provide effective treatment to everyone. As a healthcare provider, I need to ensure treatment is provided effectively. In case of any shortfalls or gaps that hinder the provision, I should identify, evaluate impact of the shortfall and design interventions to mitigate and prevent future recurrences. Some of the ways to address them are by educating and training colleagues and others working in a health system on how to manage such shortfalls. If it's a shortage of medical equipment like ventilators, then partnering with companies that can manufacture ventilators with the same principle as well as in collaboration with government makes the process cheaper. A shortage of personnel can be addressed by recruiting well-trained personnel as well as educating the current untrained personnel to effectively deliver healthcare services.

“It is every healthcare provider's mandate and duty to ensure our government provides necessities for us to provide effective treatment to everyone.”

- Kassim Sabwa



Melissa Buttuk

**Bachelor of Pharmacy
Student, UoN**

Hmmm, COVID-19.

Where do I begin, it has been quite a ride. I can recall back to about a week before the start of the year. With a journal at hand, I jotted down all the dreams and goals that I had planned on pursuing.

We crossed over to the New Year and soon after I began making moves to fulfil each milestone I had set. As arduous and enthusiastic as I was, I would not have foreseen the upcoming change that would rock everyone's lives.

In March, the first case of coronavirus was reported in the country setting off a catalytic reaction of events. In an aim to control an outbreak, a national directive was given to schools and universities to shut down indefinitely. I received this news with mixed feelings because as any overworked student, the idea of getting a break from schoolwork and exams for a while was appealing. However, it soon dawned on me it wouldn't be just a couple of weeks' stay.

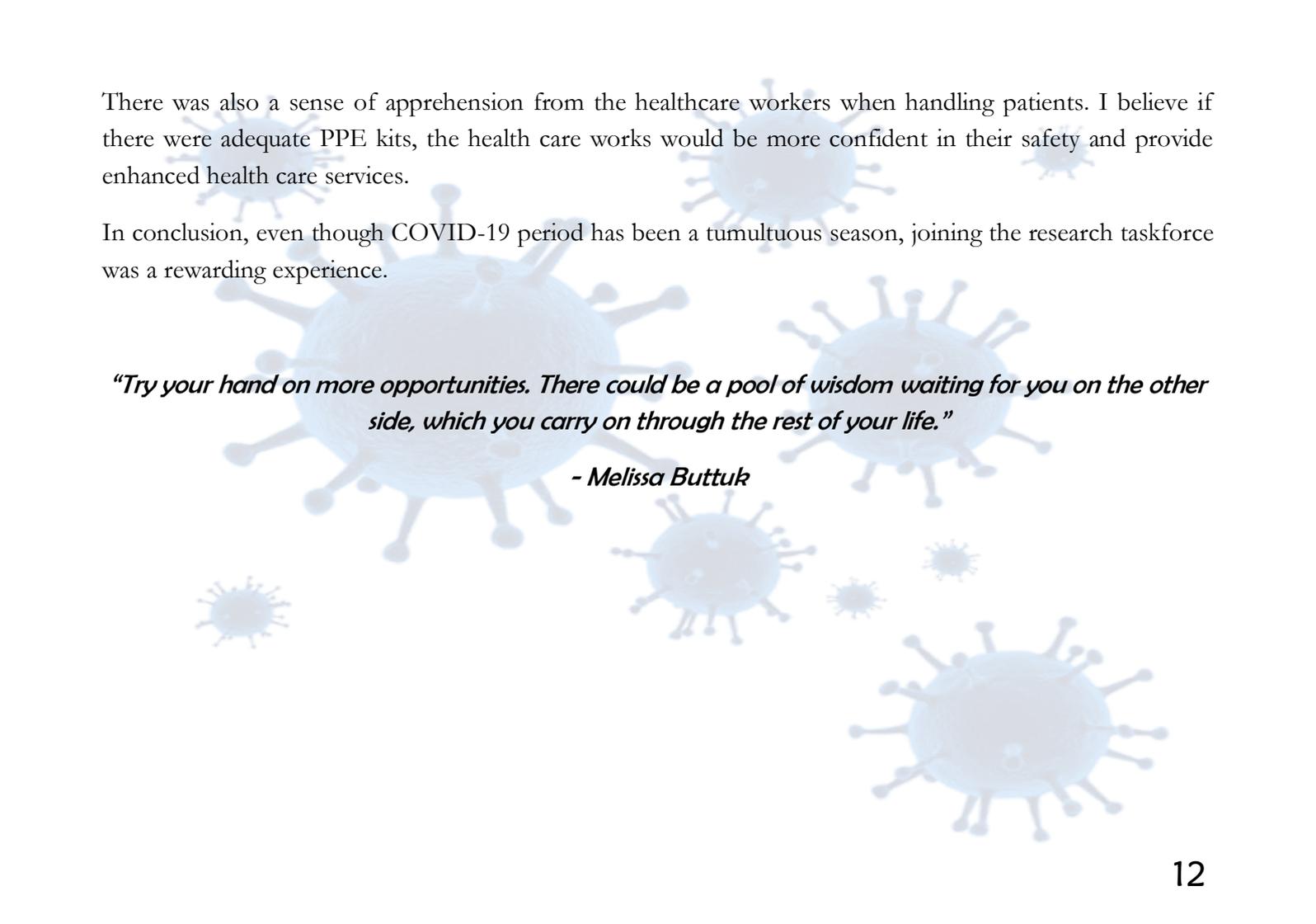
Life at home experience varied from person to person. Mine was but a simple existence with the days slowly melding into each other, full of household chores and farm work. After all was said and done, most of my days would end with watching news. Over time there was an accretion of anxiety and uncertainty in our household.

Online classes began a month into quarantine which was ironically a short reprieve for me for it felt like a semblance of normalcy was returning. It was around this time a call for applications for the COVID-19 Research Taskforce was in circulation. I was exceedingly tentative in applying since I had close to no experience in compiling a research paper besides the practical lab reports I did as part of the school curriculum. Riddled with self-doubt, I applied after a pep talk by a dear friend. Looking back I am glad I did.

Being part of the team has been an eye-opener for me in regards to professional, academic and personal development. I could compose a lengthy essay with all the knowledge I garnered. However, to keep it brief, I learnt how to draft a literature review and had my first one published. The friends I made along the way and morale gained were perks that came with the deal.

Advice for anyone who wasn't part of the taskforce; try your hand on more opportunities such as this one. There could be a pool of wisdom waiting for you on the other side, which you carry on through the rest of your life.

During the early days of the pandemic, by unfortunate happenstance, I fell ill. The hospital visit, albeit brief, was not the most reassuring. There was a clear need to improve in terms of the standard operating procedures in regards to hospital management with the addition of social distancing. The hospital premise was full of patients unsure of where to seek help.



There was also a sense of apprehension from the healthcare workers when handling patients. I believe if there were adequate PPE kits, the health care workers would be more confident in their safety and provide enhanced health care services.

In conclusion, even though COVID-19 period has been a tumultuous season, joining the research taskforce was a rewarding experience.

“Try your hand on more opportunities. There could be a pool of wisdom waiting for you on the other side, which you carry on through the rest of your life.”

- Melissa Buttuk



Hezron Munyakin

**Bachelor of Pharmacy
Student, USIU-A**

Since the beginning of the pandemic, life has been different for me. Unlike before where I would meet and interact with people normally, this time I have had to stay home to be safe from contracting the virus. Despite the disadvantage of the restrictions, I'm glad that I have been able to spend more time with family and bond. This has been the longest time I have been able to spend with my family since I joined Pharm School. I don't take it for granted because its been a good experience being home and assisting in different duties. Aside from that I have been able to work from home on different projects that have been successful. This season has taught me that it is important to always keep moving despite life's stumbling blocks that come ahead of us. We have to be versatile to continue with life so as not to miss on opportunities that could come by as we wait for the

problems to subside.

I'm glad to say that my academic work did not get distracted when the pandemic started. We were lucky that our institution quickly adapted to technological models of learning to ensure continuity of our education. Despite the few challenges experienced in the process of starting, we were able to catch up with technology. I'm happy to say that we are now almost completing the third semester online. This has taught me the value of embracing technology. As Stewart Brand once said *“Once a new technology tolls over you, if you are not part of the steamroller, you are part of the road.”*

Joining the Ryculture COVID-19 Research Taskforce was one of the best choices I made during this pandemic. From meeting new people to lessons on COVID-19 and personal development to sharing discussions on personal experiences/opinions, I must say I have grown to be a better person and more knowledgeable. Life is about improving ourselves for the better and learning from others. There is no better way to grow than associating yourself with people who are ahead of you considering it's a place you aspire to be.

Being part of the Taskforce, we were able to share our different life experiences to discussing different topics together hence learning from each other. For an individual who is keen on learning from other people's experiences, joining the Ryculture family will be an excellent opportunity. One of my key takeaways from the discussions we've had is that we all have different perspectives from which we look at things in life. It is therefore important to listen to other people, understand them and appreciate their perspectives of life based on their realities.

Conversations on our poor health systems are rising globally and we cannot deny the evident fact of our ailing health systems. New technologies are coming up daily in the health sector but people continue getting sick every day. There is an upsurge of preventable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, cancer among others. Our health systems are said to be reacting to sickness rather than acting towards prevention of diseases. Participating in the taskforce discussions, we have been able to discuss basic measures in which we can advocate for better health in the society.

This COVID-19 pandemic season has uprightly shown us that basic hand washing can prevent acquiring diseases. Recent health studies have further shown that there has been a decline of diseases such as cholera this time and good hygiene has been the leading reason. Our bodies well-being has proven to be related to our day to day activities. Many diseases are preventable and therefore it takes an individual's actions to protect themselves from getting sick. For example, staying close to a person who is smoking, you become a passive smoker. With long term passive smoking you can develop respiratory illnesses. Its prevention is as easy as staying away from people when they are smoking because you know the implications it has on your health. Being part of the taskforce, I have been able to learn that our actions play a huge role in preventing diseases and sharing information to better human life.

In conclusion, being part of the Ryculture family has made a positive impact in my personal life. We all have a gift as humans which is the capability to learn. The ability to learn is a skill but the willingness to learn is a choice. Ryculture gives you the opportunity to learn in different aspects of life to be better. So why not join and learn?

“The ability to learn is a skill but the willingness to learn is a choice.”

“We have to be versatile to continue with life so as not to miss on opportunities that could come by as we wait for the problems to subside.”

- Hezron Munyakin



Kelly Wanyonyi

**Bachelor of Pharmacy
Student, Kabarak University**

I am a pharmacy student, zero experience in pharmacy practice, a lot of experience with pharmacology and just about anything to do with school work, you know how B. Pham can be. Needless to say, books cannot always provide all the answers we need. We cannot learn how to communicate, network, socialize and sometimes even how to write academic papers by burying our heads in cramming (or mastering) structure activity relationships, can we? There's more to pharmacy (or any other course), than endless hours of reading and internalizing materials in the library. That's the whole point of professional development. Even with the myriad of challenges COVID-19 came along with, I am delighted to say it gave me the opportunity to polish my training, not just as a future pharmacist, but as a person as well. All thanks to Ryculture Health and Social Innovation.

Since April, I have been part of Ryculture's COVID-19 Research Taskforce. The initial goal being to carry out research and present our findings. I would love to narrate how I ended up applying for this, but you know all those narratives about people being destiny shapers and stuff? Yeah, a close friend encouraged me to sign up for it. I had a couple of expectations, some a bit narrow minded if you ask me, but the outcome broke my scales. Over time I have learnt a lot about pharmacy practice, academic writing and publishing. My checklist was complete, very much satisfying, but I kept adding items on my list, I kept learning and growing.

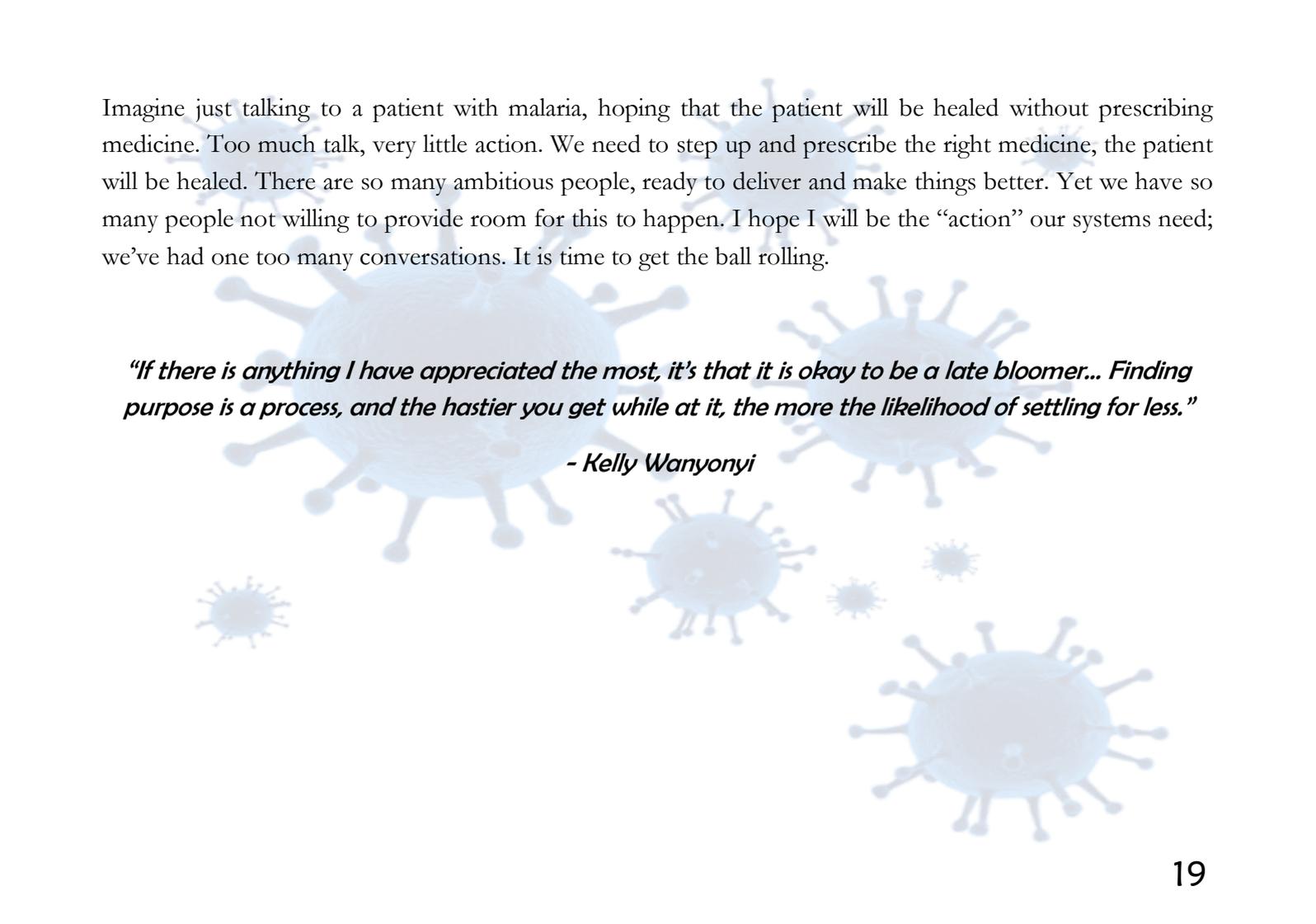
I find interacting and socializing with people a good opportunity to learn. Human beings are a curious lot, being aware of so much, and so little paradoxically. Whatever I don't know, I'm pretty confident someone else knows and has vast knowledge on it. However, the ambivert in me can only get so far. First time we met as members of the taskforce, I'm pretty confident I said almost nothing. Fast forward to the most recent meeting we've had, someone will probably say I am the noisy hornbill (or not, I know someone who beats me at this). The extent of comfort and freedom that has been created provided good soil for my personality to thrive. I have said my thoughts out loud, made cunning comments, given suggestions and listened. Someone else would see it as talking too much, I see it as me being more self aware. I can confidently stand up for what I believe in, I have taken up character building habits, decluttered other habits and given myself a chance to grow. I am in love with the person I am now, a ton load more than before.

Since freshman, I have always been a sucker for books, not your typical type of bookworm though. I am just not a failure, no matter how hard B. Pham tries being. On campus classes were kind of tough, but online classes? Quartz! I'm talking extra tough. Striking a balance between class work, house work and my sanity has been no mean feat. I wake up every Monday morning looking forward to Friday. Not because the weekend is coming, but because of the Taskforce meeting. Yes, it was that exciting; none of us can deny this. Friday was my day to journal, not as in writing a journal. I get to share how my week was, my highlights, low moments, a new habit I've taken up and best of all, a break from the brutality of Turnitin. I have learnt that I can get good grades and get other things done as well. It has been easier for me to deal with academic life, with much less pressure, but giving it just enough importance.

We have pharmacist interns in the taskforce, finalists and junior pharmacy students. All of them challenge me to do better, and I know there are sweet fruits waiting for me, literally. My goal is to do the best I can, always.

Every Friday, with a few exceptions, since the task force was up and running, I have learnt a thing or two. From learning how to research, write articles, present facts, network, communicate, get things done, being self aware, the list is endless. All of these are important lessons, and knowledge that should be made a mandatory requirement to do life. But if there is anything I have appreciated the most, it's that it is okay to be a late bloomer. I have seen young people doing big things, making big moves and breaking norms, and I love every bit of it. I have also seen young people confused, struggling to find purpose, moving from opportunity to opportunity while hoping to find their niche while at it. I just happen to be in the latter category. I have always wanted to be in the former. This steers me to get involved, but never really getting there. I used to put so much pressure on myself to figure it all out, but not anymore. I'm taking my time with this. Finding purpose is a process, and the hastier you get while at it, the more the likelihood of settling for less. If you are like me, take your time, trust the process and don't slack. While at it, do not forget to live.

Joining the taskforce has given me an opportunity to learn and be aware of what is happening on the ground in practice. I would take the time to mention a few nooks and crannies in our systems, maybe even applaud some practices. All that will just be talk. I believe our system has potential, we know what needs to be done away with, improved and what needs to be strengthened. But just how much is being delivered?



Imagine just talking to a patient with malaria, hoping that the patient will be healed without prescribing medicine. Too much talk, very little action. We need to step up and prescribe the right medicine, the patient will be healed. There are so many ambitious people, ready to deliver and make things better. Yet we have so many people not willing to provide room for this to happen. I hope I will be the “action” our systems need; we’ve had one too many conversations. It is time to get the ball rolling.

“If there is anything I have appreciated the most, it’s that it is okay to be a late bloomer... Finding purpose is a process, and the hastier you get while at it, the more the likelihood of settling for less.”

- Kelly Wanyonyi



Michele Mayuba

**Bachelor of Pharmacy
Student, UoN**

At the beginning of March 2020, I had never given a thought to COVID-19. I was just taking a breather from my first set of continuous assessment tests while undertaking my pharmacy rotation hours through the second semester. It took the presidential address on 15th March for me to realize my body was worn out. Intensive courses like pharmacy sometimes make you oblivious of your own body let alone what is going on around you. You have to make a conscious decision to stay in the loop of daily news otherwise you may be in the library and half the country is in flames.

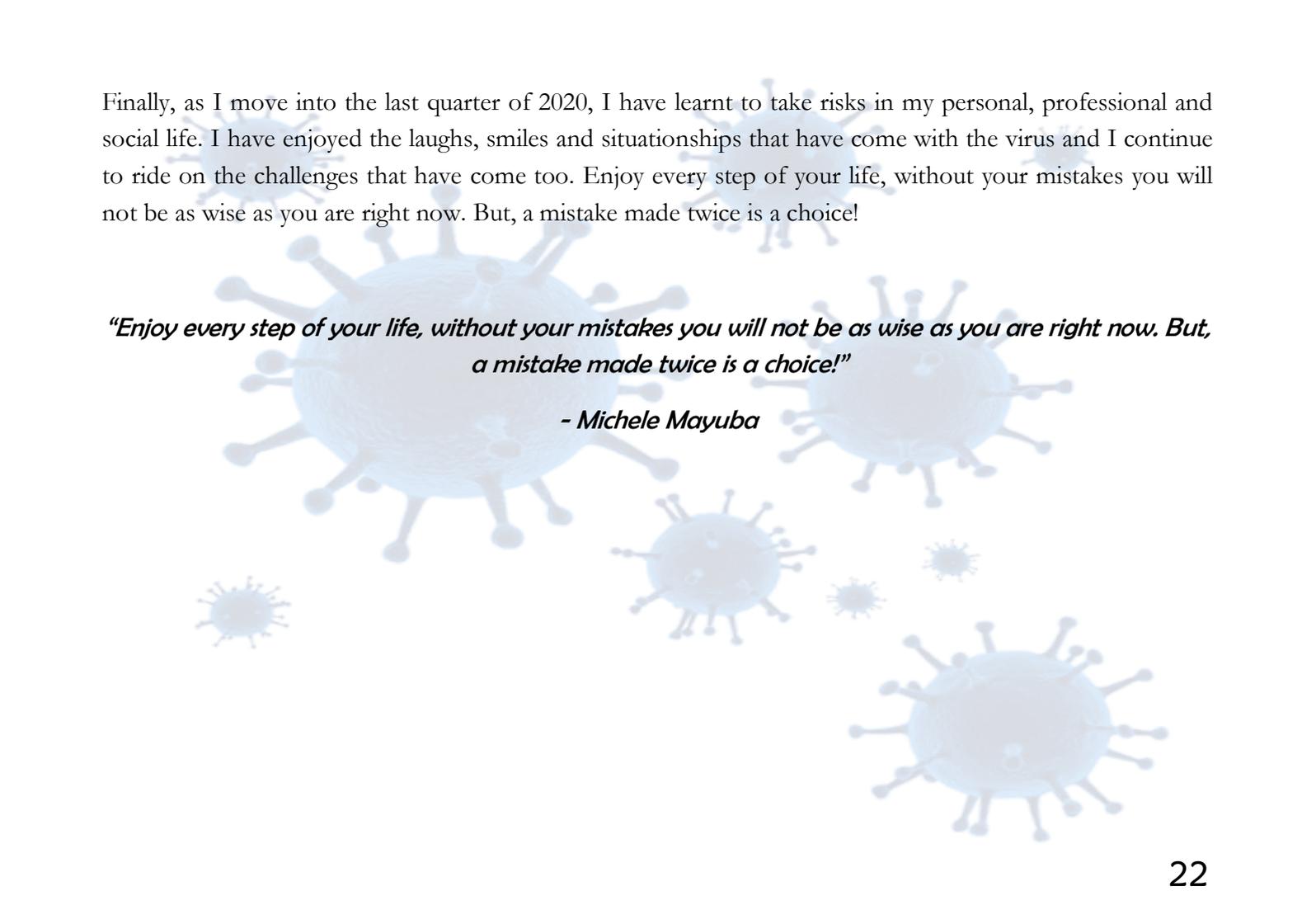
When universities were closed, I saw this as an opportunity for ‘The World Class University’ to roll into the digital era, to update the curriculum and to spice things up so that we wouldn’t feel so ancient compared to other universities offering pharmacy, considering we scored a 52% on education quality of health science colleges. However, my university college comrades didn’t want to subscribe to my vision of the digital era and I had to take a personal initiative to adapt to the new normal and salvage the remaining months of 2020.

I had made 4 serious 2020 goals and I was not willing to let them slide. I decided to take up any opportunity I came across that would help me achieve most of my goals and I ended up stumbling across Ryculture Health and Social Innovation. Initially it was a means to my goal, to publish a health-related paper by the end of the year, but it grew to become an off-school squad where I have met other pharmacists who made it out of the course sane. However, months later, that has not been the highlight of my experience.

I have met pharmacist who dared to balance school, leadership and tons of initiatives. I have met creative, outgoing, outspoken and loyal pharmacists. I have realized the importance of giving hope to those a year or two behind us and make them realize there is more to pharmacy than its technical bits. We have had countless life skills sessions covering diverse topics and I have bagged quite a number of friendships that would be useful in the next few years. Through all this, I wrote two articles and I am still working to publish a paper although my timeline has been pushed to 2021.

I always remind myself to try out everything that will not kill me and I encourage anyone hoping to diversify themselves to try out as many fields as they can because you will never know what you want if you don't know what does not work for you. Understand what interests you before signing up for opportunities available. I am enthusiastic about research and it made sense for me to join Ryculture to see where this would lead me. Do not hesitate to try, because one step can open up more opportunities than what you could imagine.

Our health systems are under-developed and pharmacy in Kenya and Africa at large is underrated. We could complain but it's our responsibility to initiate a paradigm shift towards highlighting its value. I would love to be a change maker in my own capacity, but one finger has never killed a fly but a fist can kill a man. I recognized I have a role to play in bringing change in the health sector but I need a team of equally inspired pharmacist as well as a team of multidisciplinary individuals to work towards that.



Finally, as I move into the last quarter of 2020, I have learnt to take risks in my personal, professional and social life. I have enjoyed the laughs, smiles and situationships that have come with the virus and I continue to ride on the challenges that have come too. Enjoy every step of your life, without your mistakes you will not be as wise as you are right now. But, a mistake made twice is a choice!

“Enjoy every step of your life, without your mistakes you will not be as wise as you are right now. But, a mistake made twice is a choice!”

- Michele Mayuba



Dr Lilian N. Muthoni

Pharmacist

2020 started just like any other year, setting resolution for the New Year as I reflected on the past year. However, this time it was slightly different because I was done with formal education, 8-4-4, system and the real ‘adulting’ was about to begin. It was both exciting and terrifying in equal measure, the prospect of internship and having to properly curve out my career both weighed on my mind at that particular time but I took solace in the fact that the year was still just starting and I would figure it all out as time went by.

Then there was talk of the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI), 3rd world way and coronavirus that at the time was ‘localized in China’. I remember my colleagues and I being marveled at how fast the Chinese built the isolation hospital with 1000 bed capacity and wishing our government could be that efficient. It all felt like a distant pandemic that had nothing to do with us until the first case was announced in March and the whole country was brought to a standstill. Initially, most people were in panic because of the disease but thought it was a 2-weeks break to unwind and catch up but as time went by things were taking a turn for worse.

However, as time passed, nothing changed and the cancelation of all events including Pre-internship exams and graduation brought the reality of the matter closer home. Suddenly, all the days felt and looked the same. News was rather scary, all the plans were canceled and cabin fever which I never thought I’d have started creeping in.

Luckily, I had the International Pharmaceutical Students Federation (IPSF) AfRO Regional Projects Office work to keep me busy. My team and I had to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic by keeping the members informed about the pandemic as well as adapt all the pending projects to the situation especially with the cancelation of the regional symposium. I was doing campaign management full time as opposed to part time with school work before. I really enjoyed that period, my creativity, work ethic and team management/collaboration grew and I came to appreciate the opportunity to grow as a Project Officer.

One day, I came across a post by Dr. Odhiambo David and in it he was looking for individuals interested in collaborating on writing articles on COVID-19. After a brief call and two weeks later we had an article highlighting the lessons from past pandemics. Later on, I joined the Ryculture Health and Social Innovation COVID-19 Research Taskforce, the in-house response a team of 10 individuals dedicated to reviewing, analyzing and presenting valuable & reliable information relating to the pandemic. Different individuals drawing experiences from different settings came together to research and put out informative articles on the pandemic at a time when a lot of myths and misconceptions were circulating on most media sites.

As they say change is inevitable, as the team grew, more of personal development came in through the weekly meetings. I found myself looking forward to Friday nights to reflect on the week, let out my thoughts and get motivation for the coming week. The lockdown gave me time to reflect on what the future has in store for me. The whole world was turned upside down and only the fit were to survive.

I realized the value of networking, having a personal brand, an emergency plan and fund, and being able to adapt to any unforeseen circumstances. The Friday meet ups turned out to be therapy and growth sessions, 90% of us have never met in person but we have grown to become a family that cares for one another and come through for each other deeply and for that I'm forever grateful.

All in all, the past 5 months have been enlightening, filled with unique set of challenges, growth opportunities and self-awareness. With this new phase of the taskforce and life going back to the 'new normal, I am very excited to witness and experience what the future holds: both opportunities and challenges.

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- Dr Lilian Muthoni



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