

ENT and audiology in the Land of a Thousand Hills

BY KAITESI BATAMULIZA MUKARA

Rwanda is a beautiful country known as the ‘Land of a Thousand Hills’. It is located in the Great Rift Valley in East Africa and shares borders with Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, all offering direct flights to the capital city, Kigali. Nairobi is just an hour’s flight away from Kigali. Rwanda is proud to showcase its natural mountainous beauty, rich cultural heritage, wildlife, MICE industry, good governance, cleanliness and security. All this makes the country an appealing destination for organisations, universities, tourism, and medical tourism.



Entrance to Humanhood Clinics in Rwanda.



Reception area of the clinic.

My name is Dr Kaitesi Batamuliza Mukara, and I am an ENT surgeon, audiologist and public health advocate, as well as the founder of Humanhood Clinics, located in the picturesque Land of a Thousand Hills. I have also recently completed my studies in allergology. Previously, I held the esteemed position of founding chair of the academic ear, nose and throat department at the University of Rwanda until 2018, when I embarked on a new venture specialising in speech, language and audiological disorders. Due to the lack of sufficient medical services in Rwanda, it was always my ambition to establish a specialised medical facility to fill the void, redefine healthcare and make a difference in the lives of those with hearing impairment who could not receive the help they needed

in country. As a result, Humanhood Clinics was born, fulfilling not only my personal ambitions but also providing a valuable contribution to the community.

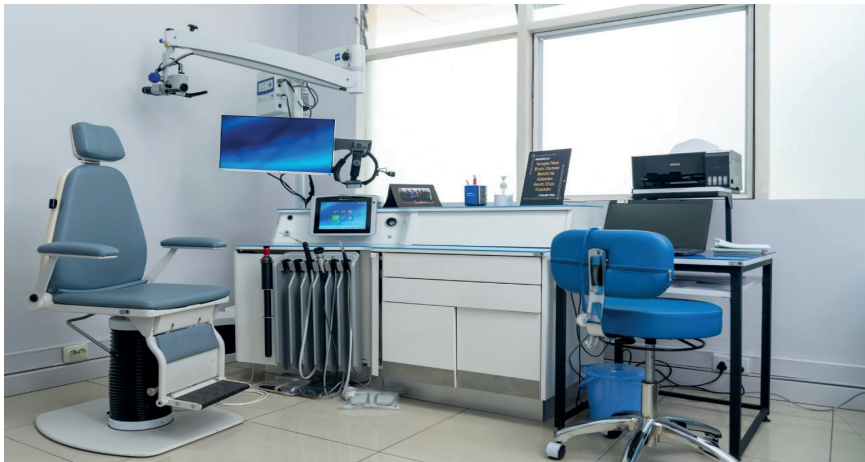
Humanhood Clinics

Situated in the heart of Kigali, Humanhood Clinics was established in December 2019 to cater mainly to the requirements of Rwandans, providing extensive ear and hearing healthcare services. Patients were compelled to seek treatment abroad before Humanhood Clinics’ establishment. Unfortunately, as the clinic was set up merely three months prior to the first Covid-19 case identification in Rwanda, the timing was inopportune. Having successfully acquired the costly basic ENT equipment, surgical instruments, audiology equipment and consumables,

our clinic faced imminent jeopardy with the imposition of lockdowns, just after we had opened its doors. After numerous waves of the Covid-19 pandemic, our persistence and perseverance paid off, resulting in a positive shift towards delivering essential medical services to the population of Rwanda and neighbouring countries.

Presently, Humanhood Clinics operates an ENT clinic with a full-time resident and several part-time ENT surgeons. In addition, the clinic offers a comprehensive range of audiology services, such as ABR testing, OAEs, ASSR, paediatric and adult hearing assessment, as well as the dispensation of an extensive range of hearing aids and accessories. The clinic also provides speech and language therapy, dental services, and weekly physician clinic. Moreover, there is an in-house laboratory. In December, we are set to launch fresh occupational therapy facilities and a specialised allergy clinic. We are also looking toward obtaining equipment for the diagnosis and treatment of vestibular disorders. Currently, this service is not accessible in Rwanda, with the only

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Kaitesi's consulting room.

available centre located in Nairobi, serving the entire region.

Obtaining a licence to operate a medical facility in Rwanda poses little challenge; however, establishing a specialist medical facility that involves importing sensitive and expensive equipment is highly demanding. Procuring the necessary equipment in this context is a difficult undertaking and, regrettably, at times we receive equipment that does not meet our expectations due to the lack of face-to-face communication during negotiations. Nonetheless, perseverance is pivotal, and every journey commences with the first step.

Our progress

Recently, the clinic has purchased an advanced ENT treatment unit with a stunning blue glass worktop that provides numerous options for diagnosing and managing various ENT disorders and illnesses. The innovative unit is designed with excellent ergonomics, offering a high level of comfort and flexibility for users. In addition to reducing user fatigue and enhancing efficiency in the ENT consultation room, the unit's multiple integrated functions also instill patient confidence in a professional medical environment.

At Humanhood Clinics, we are dedicated to providing top-quality medical care to our patients. We have invested in expanding our facilities to ensure that we maintain the highest standards of excellence. Our team is committed to continuous growth and improvement, and we believe that pampering our patients is the best way to achieve these goals. We share a common vision and work closely together to provide an unrivalled level of care. It is highly satisfying to receive positive feedback from our patients, indicating their confidence in seeking medical care with us and sparing them the need to travel abroad, particularly for matters concerning audiology speech and language disorders.

Since we opened our doors, Humanhood Clinics has provided medical care to patients mainly from Rwanda, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Burundi and Gabon. Word of mouth is our primary source of patients. The majority of our patients suffer from otological ailments, including chronic ear infections that we treat with medication and sometimes surgery. Notably, we have observed a rise in the number of patients experiencing sudden sensorineural hearing loss. We effectively treat this through transtympanic steroid injections. Additionally we see a significant proportion of children with allergies and adenotonsillar disease.

Reflections

Today, I reflect on the journey that I embarked upon four years ago with great pleasure and a profound sense of achievement. The clinic's pronounced success and rapid expansion are heartening, and this can be attributed to our thriving Rwandan society, as well as the political stability and security we enjoy. However, crucial factors include perseverance, dedication, and devotion. Service, coming from the heart, has the power to touch others and provide fulfillment to all parties involved. This serves as a reminder for us all. A common Rwandan proverb is 'Every cackling hen was an egg at first.' I believe that achieving success is not a simple feat.



Scan this QR code to take a full tour of Humanhood Clinics with Dr Mukara.



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AUTHOR



Kaitesi Batamuliza Mukara, MMedENT, MSc. Audiology, PgDip Allergy, PhD, AFHEA,

Founder and CEO, Humanhood Clinics Ltd, Umoja House, Kigali, Rwanda.

+250 781 921 753

<https://www.humanhoodclinics.com>

SECTION EDITOR



Cheka R Spencer, MSc, AFHEA, FRCS (ORL-HNS),

Consultant ENT Surgeon (Rhinology and Facial Plastics), The Royal Free London; Member of the ENT UK Global Health Committee.

drchekaspencer@doctors.org.uk

@DrChekaSpencer

@ENTUKGlobal