

Rwanda is positioning artificial intelligence (AI) as a transformative tool to tackle Africa's long-standing healthcare challenges, highlighting the technology's potential to reach millions across the continent.

The message came during the fourth Africa HealthTech Summit, held from October 13-15, 2025, at Kigali Convention Centre. The three-day event brought together more than 2,500 participants, including health ministers, innovators, researchers, and policymakers, under the theme *"Inclusive Healthcare: Empowering Innovation for Health for All."*

At the opening, Rwanda's Minister of Health, Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana, described AI as a historic milestone in medicine, comparable to vaccines and antibiotics.

"When I reviewed the great moments in medical history, two discoveries stood out: vaccines in 1796 and antibiotics in 1928. The third, I believe, is what we are living through today artificial intelligence applied in medicine," he said.



Dr. Nsanzimana emphasized that AI is no longer futuristic; it is increasingly accessible via mobile phones and internet connectivity, offering new ways to detect diseases, improve clinical decisions, and deliver care efficiently to many patients at once.

"With Africa facing a shortage of doctors, AI offers a real solution," he said, pointing to Rwanda's National Health Intelligence Centre and the Zipline drone blood delivery network as examples of lifesaving innovations.

He stressed that technology alone is not enough. Skilled health workers, supportive policies, and regional collaboration are essential for AI to realize its full potential.

"We have two choices: to slow down the speed of technology, or to run fast and catch up so we move together," Nsanzimana said.

Experts at the summit underscored the need for strong governance and secure data systems. Dr. Raji Tajudeen, Deputy Director General of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), noted that most African countries are not on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3, which aims for healthy lives and well-being.

“Digital health is a core component of Africa’s health infrastructure. Data is the oxygen that sustains every health system. It informs policy, planning, and practice at all levels,” Tajudeen said.

He highlighted Africa CDC’s Digital Health Transformation Agenda, which aims to create a “connected, secure, intelligent, collaborative, and trusted ecosystem” linking disease surveillance and primary healthcare. He also called for continental frameworks to manage health data, build trust, and enable countries to share information seamlessly.

Ozonnia Ojielo, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Rwanda, added that the digital divide is not just about technology but equity. Rwanda’s initiatives, including electronic medical records, the Timbuktu Health Tech Hub, and Telehealth 2, demonstrate how digital innovation can expand access to essential care.

“Our technological ingenuity must serve a singular goal ensuring that all people have access to quality health services when and where they need them, without financial hardship and leaving no one behind,” Ojielo said.

As AI becomes increasingly integrated into healthcare, the summit made clear that Africa stands at a historic crossroads. With innovation, policy, and collaboration, technology could reshape health systems for the continent’s 1.5 billion people turning the promise of AI into practical solutions that save lives.

“AI is the world’s most transformative innovation. If we use it wisely, it can make health for all not just a slogan, but a reality,” Nsanzimana said.