



ESCP · PASCAR 2026
JOINT CONGRESS

July 31 – August 2, 2026
 Interluxury Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

STRong Heart

Strengthening Trials and Research for Rheumatic Heart Disease

An Introduction

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Programme Manager

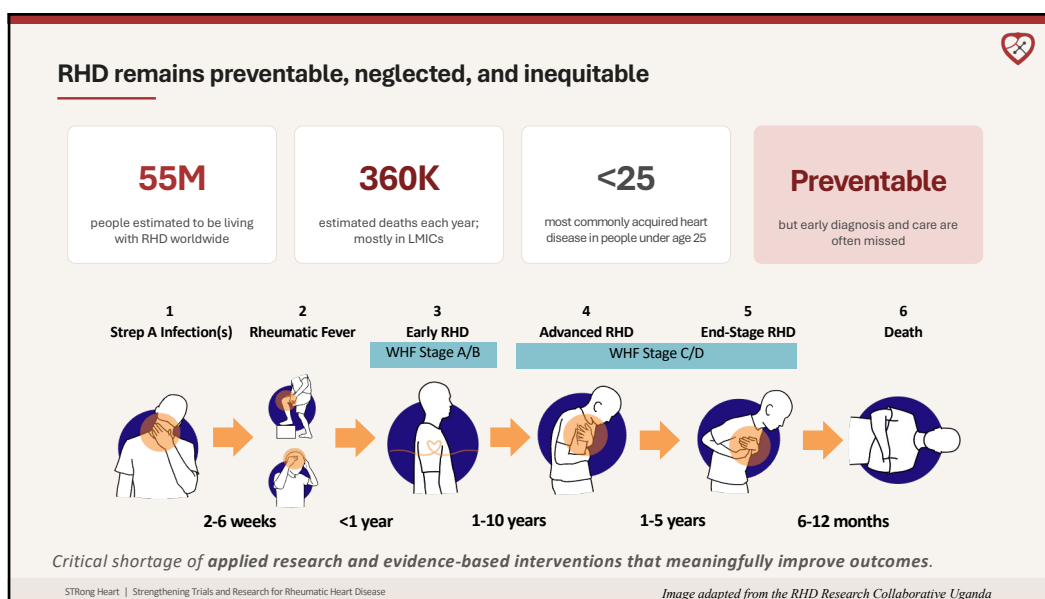




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Why now?



1

New prevention tools are emerging

Promising **Group A Streptococcus vaccine candidates** are advancing

2

Evidence gaps limit translation

Scientific advances need to be **evaluated within the endemic regions** they aim to serve, or they will not reach the people who need them most.

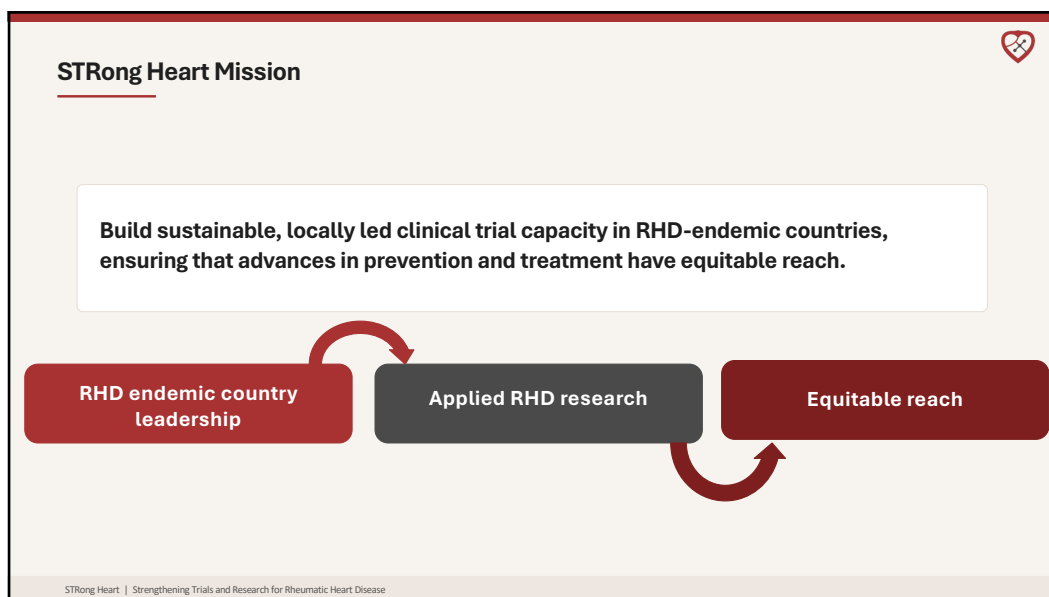
3

Poor trial infrastructure is a barrier

Robust, locally led **clinical trial capacity** is essential to turn scientific progress into policy, practice, and **real-world impact**.

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STRong Heart Network Leads

Prof Liesl Zühlke
Paediatric Cardiologist and Specialist Scientist

Prof Mpiko Ntsekhe
Adult Cardiologist and Clinical Trial Specialist

Prof Mark Engel
Evidence-Based Healthcare and Training Specialist

Dr Niveditha Devasenapathy
Epidemiologist and Clinical Trial Specialist

Prof Ganesan Karthikeyan
Adult Cardiologist and Specialist Scientist

Dr Nireesh Bhagwandin
Senior Research Administrator

Ms Jessica Abrams
Project Manager

Ms Siaa Girotra
Research Officer

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Leducq Foundation

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Scientific Advisory Committee

Prof Karthikeyan, India

Prof Saxena, India

Prof Keavney, UK

Prof de Vries, South Africa

Prof Ntusi, South Africa

A/Prof Albertus, South Africa

Prof Thabane, Canada

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Portfolio at a glance



SH CONNECT Clinical trial Testing mHealth-supported anticoagulation monitoring for RHD-associated atrial fibrillation.	SH BEAT Burden and policy evidence • Update RHD burden estimates • Include maternal outcomes • Inform vaccine and policy decisions	CAPACITY Training and site readiness tools • Capacity strengthening course, webinar, workshops • Trial operations toolkits • Sustainable expertise across contexts
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CONNECT: A Pragmatic Clinical Trial






Objective: To evaluate whether a mobile health (mHealth) intervention can improve anticoagulation management in patients with rheumatic heart disease (RHD) on vitamin K antagonists (VKAs).

STRong Heart Connect Africa • Two African countries (Ethiopia & Kenya) • Lead investigators include SAMRC and University of Cape Town clinical trial and RHD specialists.	STRong Heart Connect India • Leveraging the SMARTHealth platform • 13 Hospitals enrolled across 8 cities • Led by The George Institute for Global Health, India
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Community engagement strengthens relevance: app user-testing, Community Advisory Board input, and patient voice in governance.

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BEAT: Evidence for policy, programmes and vaccine decisions



Burden
Estimates
And
Trends

of RHD

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Quantify RHD-associated maternal mortality risk — an area current estimates underrepresent
- Project RHD disease burden over the next 10 years
- Model the economic and vaccine-impact case for policymakers, with WHO engagement

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CAPACITY



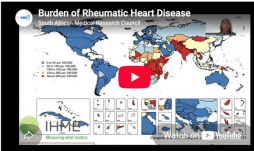
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Burden of Rheumatic Heart Disease



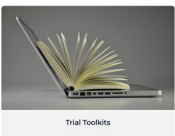
Management of Rheumatic Heart Disease in Africa

Member Login



Capacity Strengthening

Member Login



Trial Toolkits

Member Login

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How to engage



- Data & burden estimates — contribute registry or surveillance data
Start small
- Clinical & scientific expertise — offer to join protocol development or trial steering committees
- Referral sites & patient cohorts — help expand trial reach in RHD-endemic settings

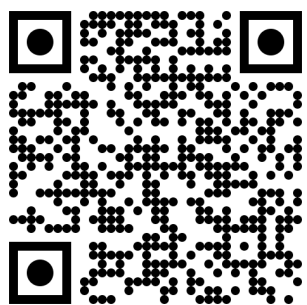
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