

Press release

Rose Gana Fomban Leke awarded the 2023 Virchow Prize for Global Health

Virchow Prize Committee announces renowned African scientist to receive international award endowed with 500,000 euros / Ceremony on October 14 at Rotes Rathaus Berlin under high patronage of Bärbel Bas, President of the German Parliament

Berlin, September 11, 2023 – The Virchow Foundation for Global Health is honoured to announce Rose Gana Fomban Leke as the 2023 Virchow Prize for Global Health Laureate. With this award, Professor Leke’s distinctive and exceptional lifetime achievements comprising outstanding contributions to global health, pioneering infectious disease research towards a malaria-free world and relentless dedication in advancing gender equality are recognized.

Rose Leke, a distinguished scientist and immunologist from the University of Yaoundé in Cameroon, has dedicated her life as a researcher to eradicating malaria, addressing health inequities and structural disparities, and combating communicable diseases, making her an internationally celebrated advocate for global health. The Virchow Prize Committee states that Leke’s innovative research and courageous leadership have led to transformative initiatives on the African continent and beyond in combating widespread diseases, advancing scientific approaches and addressing challenging structural concerns and important cultural contexts.

Throughout her career, Professor Leke has conducted groundbreaking research and led dedicated scientific work on infectious diseases, particularly focusing on pregnancy-associated malaria, polio and on the vaccination of the most vulnerable. Her work has shed light on the complex interactions between pathogens, hosts, and environmental factors, providing critical insights that have broadened the understanding of a holistic approach including effective prevention and the most modern treatment strategies towards disease eradication.

Rose Leke's tireless advocacy for women's participation and gender equity has been instrumental in raising awareness on the unique health-related challenges faced by women in different African regions and around the world. Her efforts have paved the way for policies and programs prioritizing gender-sensitive healthcare and empowering women and girls to lead a more confident, healthy and self-determined life.

“Professor Leke has been working in her country, Cameroon, and fought against the deadliest killer disease on the African continent: malaria. She not only focused on combatting diseases for decades but became a role model for adolescent girls and women in Cameroon, in Africa and all over the world. Her lifetime achievements and dedication have created a lasting ripple effect. I sincerely congratulate my esteemed colleague, Rose Leke, for receiving this honour”, stated Professor Joanne Liu, Member of the Virchow Prize Committee and former International Director of Médecins Sans Frontières.

The Virchow Prize for Global Health, established by the non-profit Virchow Foundation, is awarded annually in Berlin and honours outstanding individuals or organisations who continue the legacy of Rudolf Virchow through their exceptional lifetime achievements and innovations in advancing global health. The award serves to acknowledge those whose work embodies the spirit of global health partnerships and the UN 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals.

The festive Virchow Prize for Global Health Award Ceremony in honour of Rose Gana Fomban Leke will take place on Saturday, October 14, 2023, at 17:00 hrs (CET) at the Rotes Rathaus (Berlin City Hall), a day before the opening of the World Health Summit. The ceremony will be livestreamed. More information on the award and to watch the official 2023 laureate announcement: virchowprize.org

About the Virchow Foundation for Global Health

The Virchow Foundation for Global Health was established in 2021 with the support of the Presidents of the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina and the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities as well as Members of the German Parliament to contribute to the improvement of health worldwide. This purpose is achieved through the joint commitment of highly respected individuals and organisations, the close partnership with the World Health Summit, and the establishment of the Virchow Prize for Global Health. More information: virchow.foundation

For media representatives

Accreditation for media representatives to attend the 2023 Virchow Prize for Global Health Award Ceremony is open until October 12, 2023. Please use the dedicated form available at virchowprize.org/communications-kit/

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