



# APHPN NEWSLETTER

Quarterly Newsletter of the Association of Public Health Physicians  
of Nigeria

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## From the President

### PROF. ALPHONSUS ISARA

Dear colleagues, it is my pleasure to communicate with you in this second quarter of the year 2023. I am delighted to inform you that a major achievement this quarter, was the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) award to our journal. The TETFUND has graciously allocated the sum of five million naira only for the professional and content development of the Journal of Community Medicine and Primary Health Care (JCMPHC). I am confident that the Editor-in-Chief and Editorial Board will judiciously utilize this fund to place our journal in an enviable pedestal in the academic space. On behalf of the Board of Trustees and EXCO, I sincerely thank the immediate past Editor-in-Chief, Prof. Vivian Omuemu for working tirelessly to drive the process that culminated in this award.



In a related development, the APHPN Research and Grants committee has developed two manuscripts from the results of the nationwide mandatory COVID-19 vaccination study. These manuscripts have been submitted for publication in peer reviewed journals. While thanking the Chairman of the committee Dr. Nyemike Awunor and his team for this great stride, I urge the committee to work harder to attract grants for the Association.

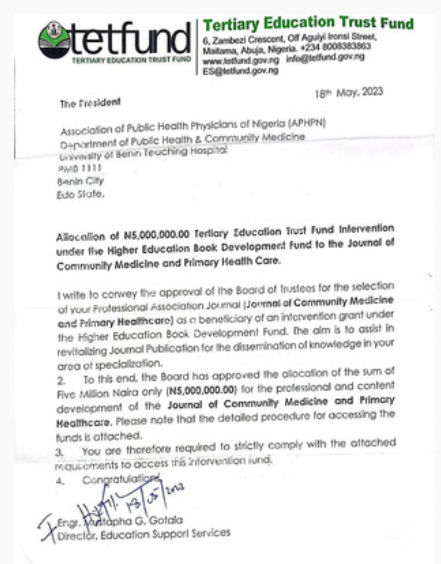
On a sad note, on behalf of the BOT, Executive Council, and members of APHPN, I sincerely condole with Prof. Wole Alakija, on the passing away of his beloved wife, Mrs. Eunice Nneka Alakija. May God grant eternal rest to her and the fortitude for the family to bear her loss.

Once again, I encourage APHPN members to contribute to the newsletter and give regular feedback to the publicity committee. I wish you a happy reading.



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# UPDATE FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Dr Alphonsus Aigbiremolen

Here are some important updates from the National Secretariat for the second quarter of 2023:

APHPN was represented by the President, Prof. Alphonsus Isara and the Secretary-General, Dr. Alphonsus Aigbiremolen at the 17th World Congress on Public Health (WCPH) which took place in Rome Italy in May 2023. The Congress with the theme A World in Turmoil: Opportunities to Focus on the Public's Health was organized by the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA) and partners.

The Environmental and Occupational Health Caucus of APHPN marked the 2023 World Environment Day (WED) with a webinar titled Plastic Waste: Environmental challenges, health effects, and management solutions. The theme of this year's WED celebrated on the 5th June 2023 was Beat Plastic Pollution. The webinar presentation was made by Prof. Steve Abah, Chairman of the Caucus and was attended by APHPN members and other participants across Nigeria and elsewhere.

The 6th edition of the APHPN bimonthly Capacity Building Webinar in collaboration with the World Continuing Education Alliance (WCEA) was held the 9th of May 2023 with the theme Essentials of Risk Communication for Disease Prevention and Control. The webinar speaker was Prof. Mu'awiyyah B. Suffiyan.

APHPN has endorsed World Federation of Public Health Associations' (WFPHA) Maternal and Child Oral Health Initiative in a letter addressed to Dr. Hyewon Lee, the Chair of Oral Health Workgroup of the WFPHA. The initiative aims to promote a system of health care for mothers and children to achieve better oral health and oral health equity.

# APHPN ATTENDS WOMEN IN POWER CONFERENCE

Dr. Juliette Ango, APHPN FCT Branch

APHPN attended the Women in Power Conference on Nutrition held at Transcorp Hilton, Abuja on the 17th of May, 2023. The conference with the theme WOMEN IN POWER: Harnessing our Position in Improving Nutrition Outcomes, was organized by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs in collaboration with the Civil Society Scaling-Up Nutrition in Nigeria (CS-SUNN), Nigeria Governors Wives' Forum (NGWF), and other Stakeholders, to generate commitments and measurable actions towards nutrition developments in Nigeria.

In a goodwill message, APHPN President Prof. Alphonsus Isara, who was represented by Dr. Juliette Ango, commended the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and NGWF for their resilience and for harnessing these great minds, women in power and major stakeholders in Nutrition for this conference. This is indeed a step in the right direction to change the status quo and curb the high rates of malnutrition and its effects in the country.

The highlight of the Conference was signing of the 5 Life-lines commitment by NGWF:

- To encourage school farming especially in public school so as to provide more nutritious foods for the children.
- Create awareness on the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding.
- Advocate for the 6 months paid maternity leave (4 months leave with pay and 2 months of remote work).
- Establishment of creches in the work places for both public and private sectors for breastfeeding mothers.
- Emphasized on realistic budgeting, timely release of funds for nutrition and accountability of funds released.



Dr Juliette Ango representing APHPN at the Women in Power Conference on Nutrition



**PHYSICIANS OF NIGERIA (APHPN)**  
C/o Department of Community Health, University of Benin Teaching Hospital, P. M. B. 1111, Benin City, Nigeria.

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24th June, 2023

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Dr Hyewon Lee,  
Chair, Oral Health Workgroup,  
World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA),  
Geneva, Switzerland.

**Re: Endorsement of Global Maternal and Child Oral Health Initiative**  
Thank you for requesting APHPN to endorse this initiative. The vision of WFPHA to promote Global Maternal and Child Oral resonates with the vision of APHPN to promote public health practice at all levels with focus on better health, equity and wellbeing for all.

*We confirm that Association of Public Health Physicians of Nigeria (APHPN) endorses the WFPHA Maternal and Child Oral Health Initiative. We confirm that we have authority to speak on behalf of the organization.*

The full endorsement statement is attached herewith.

  
 Prof. Alphonsus Isara  
President

  
 Dr. Alphonsus Aigbiremolen  
Secretary-General

# PUBLIC HEALTH SPOTLIGHT

## ADOLESCENT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN NIGERIA

**Dr. (Mrs.) Mininim Oseji**

Delta State Ministry of Environment, Asaba  
 mioseji@gmail.com



**Dr Mininim Oseji**

**INTRODUCTION**

"Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Adolescents constitute a distinct population group with specific needs and concerns, and thus merit special focus and attention within the national development framework, hence, the need for specific policy that will provide a platform for effective programme actions." (FMOH, 2007). "Adolescence is the phase of life between childhood and adulthood, from ages 10 to 19. It is a unique stage of human development and an important time for laying the foundations of good health." (WHO, 2023). "During adolescence, an individual acquires the physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and economic resources that are the foundation for later life health and wellbeing." (Patton et al, 2016). Unfortunately, in Nigeria, some of the worst health indices particularly with regards to sexual and reproductive health are found in adolescents and youths. Among young people aged 15-24 years, 18.1% reported sexual debut before the age of 15 years and comprehensive knowledge of HIV prevention among adolescents aged 10-14 years was 1.4% (girls 1.2%, boys 1.7%). (FMOH, 2019). As at the 30th April 2023, data from the PEPFAR programme, in Federal Medical Centre, Asaba showed that there were 109 adolescents (ages 10-19) in care. (FMC Asaba, 2023). Twenty percent of girls in Nigeria between ages 15 and 19 have commenced childbearing, which at an early age result in negative consequences on the physical and mental health of girls. Half of dropout from school among adolescent girls is caused by teenage pregnancy. Young people aged 15-24 are at the highest risk of acquiring a sexually transmitted infection (STI). (HPRG UNN, 2023). Orphans and vulnerable children may also be adolescents and are exposed to financial, social and psychosocial difficulties. Their peculiar situation puts them at a greater risk of being exploited, abused, introduced into prostitution and other criminal acts. (PHIRC, 2007)

**HEALTH LITERACY FOR ADOLESCENTS**

Barriers to communication on adolescent sexual and reproductive health were identified in the National HIV & AIDS and Reproductive Health Survey, 2012 (NARHS Plus). Findings from the survey indicate that there is a generally low level of health communication on reproductive health issues among the Nigerian population. It revealed that most parents and guardians do not communicate with their adolescent children and wards about sexual and reproductive health issues. There was poor reproductive health communication in family with only 17% of young persons (15-19 years) being comfortable to discuss sexual matters with their mothers and 10% felt comfortable discussing with their fathers. Furthermore, only 10% of young people aged 15-19 years indicated that they were comfortable with discussing sexual matters with their teachers and 7% with their religious leaders. (FMOH, 2013). Some reasons given for parents being unable to deliver sexual and reproductive health information to their children are ignorance, cultural taboos, illiteracy, religious inclination and fear of corrupting the children. (PHIRC, 2007). In order to redress this ugly trend, the World Health Organisation in 2015 published a guide for improving adolescent sexual and reproductive health services. The expected outcome was an increase "Health literacy – The cognitive and social skills that determine the motivation and ability of an adolescent to gain access to, understand and use information in ways that promote and maintain good health." (WHO 2015).

**'Regular' health services do not meet the unique needs of the youth**

**Sexual and reproductive health services: Barriers the youth face**

- #1** Young people in need of reproductive health services may shy away from seeking the services
- #2** Existing health providers may be biased and may not be feel comfortable serving sexually active youth.
- #3** The youth may not feel comfortable accessing existing services because the way the services are set up do not meet their needs.
- #4** Many communities feel that unmarried youth should not be sexually active and therefore should not have access to reproductive health services.

Adolescents need knowledge regarding health and disease, health-related behaviours, risk and protective factors, and the social determinants of health to motivate and encourage actions which may lead to a modification of risky health related behaviours. (WHO 2015). Improving health literacy can be achieved by providing health education both in the health facility and the community. Information should be provided about types of services, health-care providers and working hours of the facility, as well as other services available in the community, such as social services, shelters, recreational services, vocational training services or services provided by agencies that finance care or provide transportation.

**ADOLESCENT FRIENDLY HEALTH SERVICES**

Garnering community support involves ensuring that parents, guardians and other community members and community organizations appreciate how important providing health services to adolescents is and support both the provision and the utilization of services by adolescents. This requires partnerships with community members and organizations to get their buy-in and to plan service provision as well as involving the adolescents themselves. Individual NGOs and government agencies should set up youth friendly centres where youths can be engaged on a one-to-one basis and steered unto more productive paths of life. (PHIRC, 2007). Youth friendly centres can be established in health facilities and double as adolescent and youth health clinics. They can also be affiliated with skill acquisition projects.

Information on the following should provided in an adolescent health clinic or youth friendly centre:

- Physical and pubertal development
- Menstrual hygiene/problems
- Nutrition including Anaemia
- Immunization particularly Tetanus Toxoid and Human Papilloma Virus Vaccine for adolescent girls
- STIs
- HIV
- Family Planning
- Maternal and Child Health Care including postpartum care and post-abortion care
- Mental health
- Substance use and substance use disorders
- Sexual violence
- Bullying and school violence
- Injuries
- Treatment of ailments such as Fever and Diarrhoea
- Treatment of disease such as AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

productive Health services	Sexual & Reproductive health education	Contraception	Pregnancy testing option
D/HIV Screening counselling and treatment	Prenatal & postpartum care	Well baby care	Nutritional servi
yth & development monitoring	Anticipatory guidance about substance abuse and other risk taking behavior	Counseling for lifeskill development	Screening for vari disorders

It is expected that health care workers will participate in school meetings, youth and other community organizations meetings to inform parents/guardians and teachers about the health services available for adolescents. They can also conduct outreach sessions with adolescents.

**Qualities of an Adolescent Health Professional**

The Adolescent health clinic also provides an attractive environment for implementing Operation Triple Zero (OTZ) activities which engage Adolescent and Young People Living with HIV (AYPLHIV) as active stakeholders and partners in their health by promoting a responsive service delivery model. The OTZ clubs offer a comprehensive HIV treatment literacy package to new AYPLHIVs, who become empowered to be self-health managers and receive support from fellow peers who are doing well. This empathic environment allows them to commit to “three zeroes”: zero missed appointment, zero missed drugs/medications, and zero viral load (VL). (PEPFAR, 2018).

**Schools Are An Ideal Place**



**PEER EDUCATORS**

The use of peer educators to promote health lifestyles among adolescents should be explored and scaled up as a strategy for promoting adolescent and sexual reproductive health for both in-school and out-of-school adolescents. Several schools have established health clubs which could provide a forum for peer educators to use the natural influence of peers on each other to achieve positive behavioural change and dissemination of correct information about issues of adolescent sexual and reproductive Health.

**Members of the health clubs shall:**

- Be examples of good behaviour and character in the school by obeying all school rules and encouraging others to do so.
- Be sources of information and facts about ARH issues and HIV/AIDS and shall educate their peers one on one, or in group.
- Counsel peers about menstruation, sex before marriage, pregnancy, STIs, HIV/AIDS and Life building skills.
- Discover peers who have difficulties, offer help, or refer them to their teachers, the principal or the nearest health centre as appropriate.
- Plan and carry out educative and informative social activities within the school and in the community.
- Hold periodic meetings, weekly, fortnightly or monthly.

**Activities to be carried out in the clubs include:**

- Presentations during social gatherings in the school such as debates, drama, quiz competitions and concerts.
- Outreach programmes to:
  - § Other schools (primary and secondary)
  - § Churches
  - § Market place etc
  - § Community fora e.g. youth group meetings
- Periodic rallies with use of megaphones, going round different sections of the community. This will take the form of procession with singing and dancing and giving of short messages including celebration of notable days.

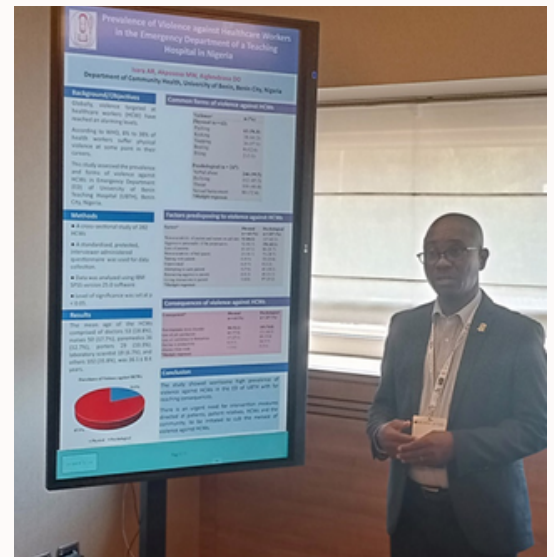
**CONCLUSION**

Information, Education and Communication should target all stakeholders in adolescent sexual and reproductive health e.g. opinion leaders, teachers, parents, male and female in-school and out-of-school adolescents, health workers, pharmacy shops, and patent medicine stores government agencies (at local, state and federal levels), etc. In addition, parents must be empowered to be a major source of correct reproductive health information to their children and wards. (PHIRC, 2007). There should be effective monitoring and evaluation of the above strategies coupled with aggressive advocacy and scaling up of whatever interventions that have been identified to work.



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Prof. Isara making a presentation at WCPH 2023

## HIGHLIGHTS OF WORLD CONGRESS ON PUBLIC HEALTH (WCPH) ROME 2023

**Dr Alphonsus Aigbiremolen**

The 17th World Congress on Public Health (WCPH) was held at the Ergife Palace Hotel, Rome Italy from 2nd to 6th May, 2023. The President and Secretary-General of AHPN Prof. Alphonsus Isara and Dr. Alphonsus Aigbiremolen respectively, represented the Association at the global event which had the theme A World in Turmoil: Opportunities to Focus on the Public's Health. The Congress was organized by the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA) and partners.

The President and Secretary-General presented scientific papers and interacted with public health researchers and practitioners from around the world during the Congress. The President's presentation which was in the area of Health Care in Danger (HCiD) drew the attention of listeners to the emerging problem of violence against healthcare in Nigeria and the collaborative efforts between AHPN and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in tackling the problem.

The plenary and workshop sessions at WCPH 2023 were rich in both content and context with presenters and speakers sharing their varying experiences in public health research and practice. There were sessions on digital public health interventions, evolving chronic disease landscape, public health ethics, climate change research, and health impact assessment among others. The speeches delivered by the WHO Director General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and Pope Francis during the Opening Ceremony were quite inspiring to participants and served as timely motivations for public health leaders and practitioners to keep working hard for the public good even in the midst of a world in turmoil.



Dr. Aigbiremolen making a presentation at WCPH 2023



Dr. Aigbiremolen with Prof. Friday Okonofua of UNIBEN and another participant at WCPH

## **Notable Public Health Days** **July - September 2023**



**JUL 28 2023**  
**WORLD HEPATITIS DAY**



**AUG 01 2023 - AUG 07 2023**  
**WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK**



**SEP 10 2023**  
**WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY**



**SEP 17 2023**  
**WORLD PATIENT SAFETY DAY**



**SEP 28 2023**  
**WORLD RABIES DAY**



**SEP 29 2023**  
**WORLD HEART DAY**

# APPOINTMENTS & PROMOTIONS

APHPN celebrates its members who have risen to enviable heights of service to mankind



Dr Mohammed Uthman  
Professor of Community  
Medicine  
University of Illorin



Dr Kabir Durowade  
Professor of of Community  
Medicine Afe Babalola  
University Ado Ekiti



Dr Musa Kana  
Professor of Community  
Medicine, Kaduna State  
University



Dr, Nmadu Grace  
Professor of Community  
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University



Dr Akeem Bolarinwa  
Professor of Community  
Medicine,  
University of Illorin



Prof Vivian Omuemu  
Deputy Provost College of  
Medical Sciences, University of  
Benin

## Dr. Terfa Simon Kene Joins BOT of CS-SUNN



Dr Terfa Simon Kene, the CEO/Team Lead of Ave Health Sense Limited has been appointed as a member of the Board of Trustees of Civil Society Scaling Up Nutrition in Nigeria (CS-SUNN) to represent Association of Public Health Physician of Nigeria. CS-SUNN is a national organization involved in public health nutrition, program implementation and policy advocacy