



# 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, communicating with you through this medium is always a great pleasure. The EXCO with your generous support, is working assiduously to deliver on the vision of APHPN and the respective mandates of our annual general meetings. I am glad to inform you that we have carried out yet another mandate of the Port Harcourt 2023 annual general meeting which directed that Taraba State APHPN should be inaugurated. To the glory of God, APHPN Taraba State branch was formally inaugurated on the 26th of August 2023. This is indeed very strategic because I am convinced that the coming on board of Taraba State will herald the spread of APHPN to neighbouring Adamawa State. On behalf of the BOT, I congratulate the Chairman and members of the newest branch of APHPN.

As part of our national engagements, APHPN was one of the relevant stakeholders at the workshop organized recently by the Federal Ministry of Health to finalize the National Mental Health Policy (NMHP) to align with the objectives of the National Mental Health Act (NMHA) 2021, and global best practices. The implementation of the NMHP is a sine qua non in the Nigerian healthcare delivery system because of the country's increasing burden of mental disorders. I sincerely thank Dr. Aderonke Akande who represented APHPN at the workshop.

As you are aware, our golden jubilee celebration and 40th Annual General Meeting and Scientific Conference tagged Ondo 2024 is around the corner. I urge State Chairmen to mobilize their respective members to register en masse and participate actively in this epoch-making event in the history of our great Association.



On a sad note, on behalf of the BOT, Executive Council, and members of APHPN, I wholeheartedly condole with our members who recently lost their loved ones. They include Dr Kamal Alabi, Chairman of APHPN Ekiti State, Dr Garba Danjuma, Chairman, of APHPN Taraba State, Dr Innocent Alenoghena, APHPN Internal Auditor, and Dr Alphonsus Aigbiremolen, APHPN Secretary General. May the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.

I encourage APHPN members to contribute to the newsletter and give 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 third quarter of 2023:

The 40th Annual General Meeting and Scientific Conference and Golden Jubilee of APHPN will be held from 10th to 15th March 2024 in Ondo State. The theme of the Conference is Repositioning Public Health in a New Political Dispensation and shall feature the presentation of Golden Jubilee awards to deserving persons.

The National Coordination Committee of the Self-Care Advocacy Network (SAN) consisting of officials of the Federal Ministry of Health, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, other MDAs, development partners, health professional groups including APHPN, private sector, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) was inaugurated on 20th July 2023. APHPN was represented at the event by Dr. Esther Malachi Cebeyi (PRO of APHPN FCT Branch) at the instance of the President, Prof. Alphonsus Isara. SAN was set up to advocate for the ability of individuals to promote health, manage their health, and understand health care beyond interventions by healthcare workers. It is aimed at reducing the workload on healthcare workers and an unnecessary burden on healthcare facilities. The Network is expected to engage in the following activities:

- High-level advocacy to policymakers at National and state levels on the introduction of self-care interventions in the country
- Development of advocacy kits/packages (including social media briefs), advocacy notes, media briefs, messages, and strategies to include all advocacy asks at the National, State, and community levels

- Joint advocacy for the inclusion of self-care interventions in the benefits package of BHCPF and Health Insurance Schemes
- Support advocacy and media campaigns for citizen's voices in self-care
- Build the capacity of members to engage in sustained advocacy, providing technical guidance on specific advocacy approaches and campaigns.

The 7th and 8th editions of Capacity Building Webinar were held in July and September 2023 respectively. The theme of the 7th webinar was The Role of Nutrition in the Prevention and Control of NCDs and was facilitated by Prof. Priscilla Utoo. The 8th edition titled Contemporary Issues in Tobacco Use and Control was facilitated by Dr. Akindele Adebisi. The Capacity Building Webinar series are jointly conducted periodically by APHPN and World Continuing Education Alliance (WCEA).

The President of APHPN, Prof. Alphonsus Isara, was invited to the Workshop for the Finalization of the National Mental Health Policy which held on the 22nd to 23rd August 2023 at Valencia Hotel, Abuja. The President was represented at the Workshop by Dr. Aderonke A. Akande, Chief Consultant Public Health and Community Medicine at FCT Primary Health Care Board Abuja. The aim of the workshop was to drive national engagement among experts and relevant stakeholders to finalize the National Mental Health Policy and had in attendance WHO, Africa CDC, NCDC, IOM, CBM Global, NGOs, and Professional Associations including APHPN. Based on the expert review meeting, important recommendations were made to improve the policy document before publication.



Group photograph of participants at the inauguration of the National Self-Care Coordination Committee and Self-Care Advocacy Network, with Dr. Esther Malachi Cebeyi in front, 4th from left

## **PUBLIC HEALTH SPOTLIGHT**

### **THE NIGERIAN WORKER AND MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD**

**Prof. Emmanuel Nwabueze Aguwa**

Department of Community Medicine, University of Nigeria Nsukka

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**Prof Emmanuel Aguwa**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

On the 10th of October each year, the world celebrates World Mental Health Day to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and to mobilize efforts in support of mental health. According to the WHO mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (WHO 2004). Some common mental health disorders (MHD) include depression; anxiety disorders (panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and phobias), substance use disorder and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Of these, the most frequently reported are anxiety and depression. These MHDs are common in workplaces. Indeed, as of 2022, 15% of working-age adults globally live with a mental disorder. (ILO/WHO 2023). In Nigeria an estimated 20% - 30% of the population is believed to suffer from mental disorders and a good number of them go undiagnosed and/or without professional assistance (Ihwa and Nsofor 2020).

#### **WORK-RELATED RISK FACTORS FOR MHD**

There are many risk factors for mental health that may be present in the working environment. Most risks relate to interactions between type of work, the organizational and managerial environment, the skills and competencies of employees, and the support available for employees to carry out their work (Igbokwe 2020). Some of these include work overload; bullying; violence; Conflicts with employers or employees; Poor salary; Poor work environment and conditions of service; Inadequate job training; unclear tasks or organizational objectives; Job insecurity; poor communication; and Unfair promotion criteria.

#### **CONSEQUENCES OF WORKPLACE MHD**

Mental Health disorders have consequences on the worker, his family and community and on the company.

On the worker: People with mental disorders experience disproportionately higher rates of disability and mortality.

On the family and community: family disruptions, loss of income to the family, loss of positive role in community. The affected family could be ostracized from the community.

On the company: long/frequent sickness absence, Presenteeism, absenteeism, reduced productivity.

#### **CHALLENGES TO CONTROL OF MHD IN WORKPLACES**

##### **Some of these include:**

- Low mental health literacy, the stigma around mental health
- The poor implementation of government policy on mental health
- Underfunding of mental health services
- Inadequate human resource partly due to brain drain:
- The gap between the need for treatment of MHD and its provision is large.

Civil society movements for mental health in Nigeria are not well developed.

#### **WAY FORWARD TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH IN WORKPLACES**

These should be done by all stakeholders: the government, the employers and the community.

##### **The Government:**

- Should ensure implementation of mental health policy at all levels.
- Mental health should be integrated into Primary Healthcare which is usually the first point of care and contact within the healthcare system.
- To improve access to mental healthcare especially in places with few specialists, task sharing me become necessary.



**The Employer:**

- Should be trained on how to recognize the early onset of mental disorder and appropriate action to take in terms of behaviour towards the employee and possible referral. They should be informed of workplace risk factors for MHD like work overload
- Mental health examination should be compulsory during medical examinations: pre-employment, periodic and post-employment medical examinations.
- Workplace protocols for reporting mental health disorders should be established.
- There should be continuous monitoring of the workplace for stress reduction e.g. avoid work overload, improve social interaction among workers, avoid bullying, etc.
- Workers should be encouraged to talk about their mental health issues without fear of stigmatization or losing their jobs.
- Along with psychiatrists or psychologists plan rehabilitation for workers with MHD.

**The Coworkers:**

- Should be trained on mental health literacy and awareness: This will reduce workplace stigma on affected workers and encourage these workers to seek appropriate help.
- Encourage effective communication in workplaces.

**The Individual interventions:**

Should be made aware of workplace risk factors, signs and symptoms of MHD and how to seek help.

The Community:

- 1.Improve mental health awareness using social media and other mass media. This will discourage stigma and encourage early reporting of MHD.
- 2.Encourage general “healthy lifestyle” programs like exercise, no smoking, no alcohol and improve dietary habits. These may reduce the levels of psychiatric illness.

**CONCLUSION**

There is high prevalence of mental health disorder among workers in Nigeria. Workplaces that promote mental health and support people with mental disorders are more likely to have motivated mentally healthy workforce. This will consequently result in reduced absenteeism, increase productivity and benefit from associated economic gains.

**Table 1: Prevalence of Anxiety and Depression among some Professions in Nigeria**

Article	Study setting	Occupation	Mental health disorder	Prevalence (%)
Yussuf AD 2005	Bank	Bankers	Poor psychological health	18.0
Obi IE et al. 2014	Hospital	Health worker	Depression	14.9
Somoye EB et al (2015)	Banks	Bankers	Generalized Anxiety Disorder Major Depression	5.6 1.7
Asa FT & Lasebikan VO. (2016).	Secondary school	Teacher	Anxiety Depression	29.5 29.3
Obi AI & Okobia I. (2021)	School	Teacher	Depression	26.1
Falade et al. 2022	Hospital	Health workers	Anxiety Depression	96.5 66.5
		Non-health workers	Anxiety Depression	84.6 61.5
Onyishi CN et al (2022)	Multiple occupations	Health workers Educators Management Others	Anxiety Depression	90.5 51.5
Ibigbami OI et al (2022)	Hospital	Doctor Nurse	Psychological distress	44.0 64.9
Osasona SO & Oderinde KO (2023)	Hospital	Healthcare Worker	Generalized Anxiety Disorder	25.4

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### APHPN PRESIDENT VISIT OGUN STATE

The National President of AHPN, Prof. Alphonsus Isara, paid a working visit to Ogun State AHPN, on Wednesday 13th of September 2023. During this visit, the President had a robust interaction with the EXCO and members of the Ogun State Branch who expressed commitment and readiness to host the 2025 Annual General Meeting and Scientific Conference of the Association. A highlight of the visit was the presentation of the “made in Ogun” gift by the Chairman of AHPN Ogun State, Dr. Daniel Adesanya, to the National President.



The President Prof. Alphonsus Isara in a group photograph with members of Ogun State AHPN

### APHPN INAUGURATES NEW BRANCH

APHPN Taraba State branch was formally inaugurated on the 26th of August 2023. We wish the state branch many notable achievements.



Group photograph of AHPN Taraba State Branch



The Executive Committee of AHPN Taraba State Branch

### DR. ZAINAB KWARU MOHAMMAD-IDRIS BECOMES PRESIDENT-ELECT OF THE MEDICAL WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA

The BOT, EXCO, and members of AHPN heartily congratulate Dr. Zainab Kwaru Mohammad-Idris on her election as MWAN President-Elect. We wish her a very fruitful and successful tenure.



### APHPN PARTICIPATES IN THE NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH POLICY WORKSHOP

APHPN was one of the relevant stakeholders at the workshop organized recently by the Federal Ministry of Health to finalize the National Mental Health Policy (NMHP) to align with the objectives of the National Mental Health Act (NMHA) 2021, and global best practices. Dr. Aderonke Akande represented AHPN at this key stakeholder engagement.



Group photograph of participants at the National Mental Health Policy workshop, with Dr. Aderonke Akande in front, 5th from right

### APHPN CONTRIBUTES TO THE NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Dr. Aderonke Akande represented AHPN as a participant at the workshop for the validation of the national suicide prevention strategic framework in Nigeria.



Dr. Aderonke Akande (1st from right) and other participants at the workshop.

## KNOW YOUR BOT

Dr Terkaa Bitto



### PROFESSOR CHRISTOPHER NDUKAIFE OBIONU

Professor Christopher Ndukaife OBIONU studied Medicine in the University of Vienna, Austria 1965-1971, and University of London 1975-1978. He obtained the Doctoris Universae Medicinae (MD) -1971; DTM&H (RCP&S England) 1975; DTPH (London) 1978; FWACP 1982; FACTM 1982; FMCPH 1992; FNAMed 2021; and Certificate in Reproductive Health and Strategic Planning for Reproductive and Primary Health Care (Johns Hopkins) 1986.

Appointment and Positions held: Lecturer/Consultant Community Physician University of Nigeria Enugu 1980; Professor 2000; Director Public Health Services, Anambra State 1985-1992 (secondment); Dean Faculty of Medicine, Ebonyi State University 2001-2003 (secondment); Adjunct Professor, Enugu State University of Technology and Imo State University 2012 to date. Services rendered: Training resident doctors/Examiner WACP 1992 to date, and NPMCN 1995 to date; Faculty Chairman, Faculty of Community Health, WACP 2010-2014; External Examiner in over 20 Nigerian Universities; University of Ghana Medical School, and Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons. He combined four decades of academia with field activities, including (part time) consultancy services to Federal Ministry of Health, UNICEF, WHO, World Bank, NUC; and MDCN.

He has about 100 conference papers at local and international conferences; recently over 50 articles in local/international scientific journals, and three widely-read mainline books: Guide to Tropical Public Health and Community Medicine; Primary Health Care for Developing Countries; and Synopsis of Occupational and Environmental Health.

He is a Member, Board of Trustees, Association of Public Health Physicians of Nigeria.

He is married with six children (2 boys and 4 girls).



### PROFESSOR AYUBA IBRAHIM ZOAKAH

Professor Ayuba Ibrahim Zoakah is a Professor of Community Medicine and Public Health at the University of Jos. He is also a Consultant Public Health Physician at the Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH).

He had his medical education at Ahmadu Bello University in 1986, after the National Youth Service, he did his residency training in the Department of Community Medicine, Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH) from 1990 to 1995. After becoming a Fellow of the West African College of Physicians in 1995, he was appointed a Consultant Public Health Physician at the same hospital. He has a Postgraduate Diploma in Management (1999) and a Master of Business Administration (2001) both from Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi. In addition to this he obtained a Postgraduate Diploma in HIV Medicine from Galilee International Management Institute, Israel (2009). He has many postgraduate certificates in Epidemiology and Biostatistics from University of Maryland, School of Medicine (2009), University of North Carolina (2018), John Hopkins University (2019), Utrecht University (2019), Imperial College, London (2020) and University of Carolina (2020).

He started his teaching career at the Department of Community Medicine, University of Jos in 1994, where he rose to become Professor in 2005. He became Head of Department at various times in both University of Jos and Jos University Teaching Hospital (1996 - 2004; 2010 - 2014). He was the Chairman Medical Advisory Committee of JUTH, from 1999 - 2003. He was also the Director of Community Medicine at the Institute of Human Virology (IHVN), Abuja from 2008 - 2010.

Professor Zoakah has trained over 100 consultant Public Health Physicians. He is a recipient of many local and international awards. He also served as a member of many technical working groups in Nigeria.

His research areas are in Clinical Epidemiology, Health Services Management and Administration. He has over 200 publications in these areas.

Professor Zoakah belongs to many professional associations such as NMA, MDCAN, WACP, AHPN, SPHPN, EPISON, RSPH, SER, IEA, AAAS etc. He was past National President of Association of Public Health Physicians of Nigeria (AHPN) and Epidemiological Society of Nigeria (EPISON).

His hobbies are watching football, tennis, and golf. He plays table tennis and badminton.

He is married and has three (3) children.

## Notable Public Health Days October - December 2023

### OCTOBER 2023

- Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- Eye Injury Prevention Month
- National Dental Hygiene Month
- Mental Illness Awareness Week (Oct. 3-9)
- Malnutrition Awareness Week (Oct. 4-8)
- World Mental Health Day (Oct. 10)
- International Day of the Girl Child (Oct. 11)
- World Sight Day (Oct. 14)
- Global Handwashing Day (Oct. 15)
- International Infection Prevention Week (Oct. 17-23)
- World Food Day (Oct. 16)

### NOVEMBER 2023

- World Pneumonia Day (Nov. 12)
- World Prematurity Day (Nov. 17)
- International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day (Nov. 20)
- World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (Nov 18-24)

### DECEMBER 2023

- World AIDS Day (Dec. 1)
- International Day of Persons with Disabilities (Dec. 3)



# APPOINTMENTS & PROMOTIONS

APHPN celebrates its members who have risen to enviable heights in academics and service to mankind



Dr Uwemedimbuk. S Ekanem  
Professor of Community Medicine, University of Uyo



Dr Benedict Azuogu  
Associate Professor of Community Medicine, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki



Dr Esohe O Ogboghodo  
Associate Professor of Public Health, University of Benin



Dr Christie Akwaowo  
Associate Professor of Community Medicine, University of Uyo



Prof Kabir Sabitu  
Vice Chancellor of Khadija University, Majia, Jigawa State



Prof. Esther Enzuladu  
Deputy Provost, College of Health Sciences, University of Jos.

## APHPN 50th Anniversary and 40th Annual General Meeting and Scientific Conference



**40<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE**  
ONDO 2024

*Theme:*  
**Repositioning Public Health in a New Political Dispensation**

*Sub-Themes:*

- Strengthening Health Systems and Surveillance. for Improved Epidemic and Pandemic Responses
- Sustainable Primary Health Care and Universal Health Care Agenda
- Control of Cancer and other Non-Communicable Diseases
- Leveraging E-Health/M-Health for Accessible and Qualitative Care Delivery in the Face of Inadequate Human Resource for Health in Nigeria
- Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, Adolescent, and Elderly Health Plus Nutrition (RMNCAEH+N) Quality of Care
- Health Care in Danger: Workplace Violence in Nigeria and the Way Forward

**Date:** Sunday 10 - Friday 15 March 2024  
**Time:** 9:00am Daily  
**Venue:** International Cultural and Events Centre (The Dome), Ondo State |

To register, Please visit: [aphpnondo2024.org](http://aphpnondo2024.org)

### Call for Abstracts

Abstracts should be structured, not exceed 300 words, double-spaced, font size 12, Time New Roman and Maximum of six (6) Key words  
Abstracts should be submitted in the following format::

1. Title with name of author(s) and institution(s)
2. Introduction
3. Methods
4. Results
5. Conclusion
6. Recommendation

**Abstract submission deadline: 30th November 2023**

### Contact

- International Cultural And Event Centre (The Dome), Akure, Ondo
- (+234) 7058621544
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- [aphpnondo2024.org](http://aphpnondo2024.org)