

# ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH PHYSICIANS OF NIGERIA



## COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUED AT THE END OF THE SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH PHYSICIANS OF NIGERIA (APHPN) HELD FROM 7<sup>TH</sup> TO 11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2022, AT DEPEACE HOTEL, ILORIN, KWARA STATE

### PREAMBLE

The Association of Public Health Physicians of Nigeria (APHPN) held its 38<sup>th</sup> Scientific Conference and Annual General Meeting at DePeace Hotel, Ilorin, Kwara State, from 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> March 2022. The theme of the conference was **“The Imperatives for Strengthening the Nigerian Health System”**. The theme reflected APHPN’s efforts aimed at consolidating the gains of the COVID-19 response with a view to ensuring better national preparedness for future health emergencies.

The Isaac Ladipo Oluwole memorial guest lecture was delivered by Dr. Prosper Okonkwo, the pioneer Chief Executive Officer of APIN Public Health Initiatives. After several scientific paper presentations, plenaries and strategic sessions on the theme and thematic areas including the state of the health system in Nigeria, the following observations and recommendations were made:

### OBSERVATIONS

1. We note that the Nigerian Health System is responding adaptively to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as other changing situations and circumstances. Notwithstanding these improvements, Nigeria still lags behind the African and global averages across key health and development indicators.
2. APHPN recognizes and commends the continued efforts of governments at all levels, international organizations, donor agencies, health care professionals and other stakeholders in effectively stemming the tide of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although these partnerships

were quite influential, the uncoordinated nature of some of the interventions thereof is of grave concern.

3. APHPN applauds the efforts of researchers in the area of COVID-19 related research, which provided the basis for evidence-based decisions and the adoption of approaches implemented during the pandemic.
4. Digital methods and applications present a promising way to increase the effectiveness of health interventions and programmes. In this regard, we acknowledge the pioneering role of APHPN members who presented two key applications on the use of machine learning for a digital disease surveillance platform and the use of a grouped telecommunication intervention in management and supervisory oversights in public health.
5. Effective risk communication in environmental health is important in reducing health impacts in communities since it is not just enough to carry out risk assessment without adequate risk communication.
6. APHPN acknowledges the effort of the Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria in increasing the contraceptive prevalence rate in Nigeria through Private Public Partnership as well as the training of three levels of Proprietary Patent Medicine Vendors (PPMV). However, we view the approach used in task shifting and sharing to be untenable as it does not reflect or involve other health professionals whose tasks are being shifted or shared.
7. The pandemic and changing health circumstances emphasizes the crucial role Public Health Physicians play at the different levels of healthcare. This involves leadership and coordination roles in formulating and implementing public health policies and interventions; especially disease surveillance and response at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of care.
8. The APHPN applauds the effort of the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) with support from Nigeria's Governors Forum and Development Research and Projects Centre Partnership for Advocacy in Child and Family Health at Scale (dRPC-PAS) in successfully conducting the 2019 Score Card 5 assessment on Primary Health Care Under One Roof (PHCUOR). We note that the report is not widely available for advocacy use and that a follow-up assessment has not been done since 2019.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided a veritable opportunity for health system strengthening. Therefore, there is a need for the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Federal Ministry of Health, to ensure the availability of strategic epidemiologic information, strengthening of key public health institutions, provision of strong public health laboratories, building a capable workforce, and private sector participation in funding health interventions in the country.
2. Donor partnerships with stakeholders at all levels need to be streamlined with coordination guidelines developed and implemented.
3. There is a need for increased and sustained funding for research on epidemic-prone diseases by the Federal Government of Nigeria, donor agencies and international partners.
4. The Federal and State Ministries of Health, as well as their divisions and related agencies, should adopt the digitalization of public health interventions to improve efficiency.
5. The Federal as well as the various States and Local governments also need to strengthen risk communication and community engagement to improve community awareness on COVID-19 and other epidemic-prone diseases.
6. We call on the Federal Ministry of Health to address the issue of delineation of roles/duties in family planning programmes especially as it relates to invasive family planning services. Before implementation, all stakeholders need to agree on the scope and limitations.
7. Public Health Physicians should be encouraged to sustain their involvement at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, while the government should put in place a framework that supports their effective participation at these levels.
8. The report of the 2019 assessment scorecard 5 should be launched and made widely accessible by the NPHCDA while steps should be taken to commence the 2022 assessment scorecard 6 on Primary Health Care Under One Roof (PHCUOF) as a lot of things would have changed in the last three years
9. As parts of efforts to enhance the resilience of the Nigerian health care system, the Conference recommended the establishment of the Departments of Public Health in secondary healthcare facilities by State Ministries of Health in Nigeria. This will provide a medium to further harness the resourcefulness of public health physicians and other public

health specialists in strengthening the overall responsiveness to health and related emergencies in the country.



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