



**ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
PHYSICIANS OF NIGERIA (APHPN)**



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**Lecture 2025**

# **Public health is our business**

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# Public health is our business: Primary Health Care Delivery in the Face of Multidimensional Challenges

# Appreciation

God Almighty and Jesus  
Christ His son

Association of Public Health  
Physicians of Nigeria  
(APHPN) and the Ogun State  
Chapter of our Association

Great honour in inviting me  
to deliver this lecture

# Rationale for the title

Stimulate our  
thinking

Cause a paradigm  
shift that public  
health is about the  
poor or as a  
consumptive part of  
the health system.

**What is  
your  
occupatio  
n?**

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A doctor,

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A proud  
public  
health  
physician.

What is your business?

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None.

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Have you ever thought that your  
occupation?

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Public health is your business

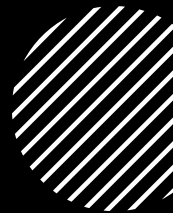
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Public healthpreneur





# Research questions



Can public health truly be a business and perhaps what kind of business can it be?



What is the relationship between public health and business?



What are the essential business skills public health physicians must have?

# Public Health definition

- Public health is the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting physical health and efficiency through organized community efforts for the sanitation of the environment, the control of community infections, the education of the individual in principles of personal hygiene,

# Public Health definition contd

- the organization of medical and nursing services for the early diagnosis and preventive treatment of diseases and the development of the social machinery which will ensure to every individual in the community, a standard of living adequate for the maintenance of health.

# Keywords

prolonging life,

efficiency,

organization of community efforts, and services

and achievement of a standard of living

# Alma Ata declaration on PHC

- Primary health care is essential health care based on practical, scientifically sound, and socially acceptable methods and technology made universally accessible to individuals and families in the community through their full participation and at a cost that the community and country can afford to maintain at every stage of their development in the spirit of self-reliance and self-determination.

# Alma Ata declaration on PHC (2)

- It forms an integral part both of the country's health system, of which it is the central function and main focus, and of the overall social and economic development of the community. It is the first level of contact of individuals, the family, and community with the national health system bringing health care as close as possible to where people live and work, and constitutes the first elements of a continuing health care process.

PHC

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Available

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Acceptable

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Accessible

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Affordable

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Essential health  
care

# Primary Health care

a whole-of-society approach to effectively organize and strengthen national health systems to bring services for health and wellbeing closer to communities

widely regarded as the most inclusive, equitable and cost-effective way to achieve universal health coverage



# Business

enterprise entity  
engaged in  
commercial,  
industrial or  
professional

whose purpose is to  
organize economic  
production of goods  
and services

# Public health business SS?

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indirectly in the economic  
production of services

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that make people well enough to  
be productive in economic  
activities.

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physicians are in the public  
health business and should begin  
to think and act like  
businesspersons and  
entrepreneurs. Without this  
attitudinal change  
we will continue to struggle to  
deliver on our mandate.

# Classification of business

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legal structure or ownership,  
sole proprietorship,  
partnership, limited  
liability and public  
corporation

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classify business into for-  
profit business which are  
created to make money for the  
owners or not-for-profit  
business.

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public health falls under  
not-for-profit business.

Nigeria  
n MSME  
categor  
ies by  
employe  
e size

Micro enterprise  
less than 9

Small enterprise  
from 10 to 49

Medium enterprise  
from 50 to 149

# The relationship between public health and business

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Businesses thrive where public health works.

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During the first and second industrial revolutions there was economic growth, industries were established

# Industry 1.0 (1760- 1840)

- Mechanization
- Manufacturing moved to machine power.
- Machines allowed faster and easier production, and they made innovations and technologies



# Industry 2.0

- “The Technological Revolution,”
- Electrification
- Allowed greater production and more sophisticated machines



?Great  
business  
growth  
without  
Public  
health

Very little thought  
about safety,  
environmental  
sanitation and  
disease outbreaks  
were common

Effects were deaths  
and reduced economic  
growth



# Severe disruption by Covid- 19

aviation, hospitality,  
transport and logistics,  
manufacturing and global  
finance

World came to an abrupt  
stop

Perhaps one lesson Covid-  
19 taught us is that  
public health is vital to  
the survival of business

# Public health

It is the  
cooperation of the  
society working  
together to improve  
both the health and the  
environment in which

Is an enabler of  
economic productivity  
and growth of any  
nation.

## Equity in Public health

There is no society without its vulnerable population,

but public health provides for the totality of human beings wherever they live.

Priority be given to vulnerable groups such as infants, pregnant women and the elderly

# Herd immunity

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Infers that until most of us are protected against infectious diseases, no one is truly safe, no matter the wealth they may have acquired.

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This was evident during the Covid-19 Pandemic in which the rich, the mighty and even some who did not venture are of the comfort of their homes contracted the virus through exposure to other persons they met with some fatalities.

**Business  
characteristics  
important to  
public health  
practice**

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Planning and the deployment  
of processes

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focus on their market share  
or market penetration

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Clearly stated vision and  
mission statements,

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skills development,

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human resource development,

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Business  
characteristics  
important to  
public health  
practice (2)

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effective customer  
service,

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passionate  
leadership

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ability to adapt  
and change.

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Accountability.

# Public health business of Dr. Isaac Ladipo Oluwole

- foremost public health physician and, a successful public health businessperson
- founded the first School of Hygiene at Yaba
- set up the first African Board of the Royal Society of Health.
- He was at the forefront of the control of plague, school ohealth services, conduct of regular sanitary inspections and immunization of children.
- The Massey Street Dispensary was established

# Good Public health practice

Knowledge, skills and development which focus on competence, being up-to-date, and compliance with the law and good standard of practice.

Patients, partnership and communication which deal with protecting the health and wellbeing of the population served, care of vulnerable groups and use of evidence-based practices including



# Good Public health practice

Colleagues, culture and safety with appropriate emphasis on honesty, truthfulness and meaningful communication and respect for others including trainees.

Trust and professionalism focusing on integrity, honesty, objectivity and importantly with clear understanding of the need to maintain personal and professional boundaries.

# PHC three key elements

- integrated health services to meet people's health needs throughout their lives
- addressing the broader determinants of health through multisectoral policy and action
- empowering individuals, families and communities to take charge of their own health.

# Component s of PHC

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Health education

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Proper nutrition and  
food supply

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Clean water and  
sanitation

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Maternal and child  
health care

Component  
s of PHC  
(2)

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Immunization

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Local disease control

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Treatment of common  
illnesses and minor  
injuries

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Provision of essential  
drugs

Later day  
components

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Primary oral  
health

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Primary mental  
health

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Occupational  
health

## Return on investment of public health interventions

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Nations develop at a faster rate when goods and services such as electricity and even telephones are made widely and regarded as therefore, if the nation will develop adequately, public health must be at the top of its priority and be treated as profitable

# Public health business equations

1. Effective public health services in Nigeria=Good business.in Nigeria.
2. Good business in Nigeria=Economic development of Nigeria.
3. Effective public health services in Nigeria=Economic development of Nigeria

# Economic benefits of programmes

- Ways of determining the economic benefits of public health interventions include
  - cost benefit ratio,
  - cost utilization,
  - cost effectiveness,
  - disability lost years,
  - number of lives saved
  - and return on investment



# ROI

Key  
language of  
business

Important  
to  
stakeholder  
s

ROI =  
(Benefits  
or revenue-  
cost)/cost

# ROI caveats

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There is much debate in the concept as the methodologies for conducting ROI studies are not widely

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and require careful interpretation.

# Systematic review of ROI of public health programmes

- From several countries reported
- a median ROI of 14.3 to 1
- and a median cost benefit of 8.3.
- Public health interventions focused on legislation and the highest ROI (46.5)
- compared with health promotion (2.2) and those focused on the wide determinants of health (5.6),

# ROI of Public Health Programmes Overall and Stratified by Level and Specialism

type	Median ROI	No of studies	Median CBR	No of stuides
Overall	14.1	34	8.4	23
Health protection	34.2	8	41.8	10
Legislation	46.5	2	5.8	2
Health promotion	2.2	6	Not reported	Not reported
Wider	5.6	6	7.1	6

# ROI of workplace-based interventions

- Benefits varied
- by study design,
- level of protection
- and type of intervention.
- For example, of the 83 primary preventive interventions 48. (58%) had positive ROI and 7 (8%) had negative ROI.

# Evidence from WHO

- **Cost effective interventions include**
- **behaviour change,**
- **vaccination,**
- **screening,**
- **those focused on environmental determinants (such as road traffic injury prevention)**
- **and those on the social determinants of health (such as healthy employment programme),**

# ROI: vaccinations

- **Pneumococcal vaccination in Spain (children under 2)**  
*(Spain)*
- **(Morano et al., 2011)**
- **Timescale: 1 year**
- **Cost: €38.36 per dose + €4.88 administration per person**
- **Savings: €22m million**

# ROI: vaccinations

- **Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccination (*United Kingdom*)**
- **(WHO, 2013b)**
- **Modelling study**
- **Timescale: 10 years**
- **Costs: £0.17-0.97 per person**
- **Savings: £240 730-544 490 over 10 years in reduced treatment costs**



# Cost savings

- **Human papillomavirus vaccination programmes (*Austria*) (Zechmeister et al.,2009)**
- **ICER for girls: €64,000 per life-year gained and €50,000 per life-year gained (payer's and societal perspectives, respectively)**

# Cost savings

- **Screening for diabetes and impaired glucose tolerance (*United Kingdom*) (Gillies et al.,2008)**
- **Modeling study**
- **Timescale: 50 years**
- **Cost-effectiveness: £6242 per QALY**

## Figure 1. A suggested hierarchy of prevention interventions

Return on investment

Cost-effective approaches where the financial benefits to health and other sectors outweigh the initial investment, giving a return on investment

Cost saving

Cost-effective approaches that generate additional health (and other) benefits at a cost that society is willing to pay these will be cost-saving if the additional

Cost pressure/business  
as usual

Continued delivery of current practice with predicted increase in health care costs over time.

## The Sabongidda-Ora Vaccination Project

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The programme was in Sabongidda-Ora, Owan West Local Government Area of Edo State. The programme offered services from 1998-2015.

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The project delivered immunization to children under one year and provided drugs for treatment of common childhood illnesses.

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The funding was predicated on adequate justification and accountability of funds provided

## The Sabongidda-Ora Vaccination Project (2)

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Within two years, the vaccination coverage rose from 43% to 84%.

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It was as one of the first programmes in Nigeria to commence combined DPT and hepatitis B vaccines and the hepatitis B birth dose.

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The project showed the medium-term efficacy of the hepatitis B vaccine.

## The Sabongidda- Ora Vaccination Project (3)

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No definite ROI studies were conducted

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but the project provided health services for the rural population in Edo State.

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One limitation of the project was its non-sustainability as the community could not fund the project

Multi-  
dimensional  
challenges to  
PHC  
delivery

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Social

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Economic

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Political

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Human resources

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Service constraints

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Technological

# Social challenges

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Low health literacy level

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ignorance

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Cultural beliefs and  
practices

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Lack of confidence in PHC  
resulting in bypass to  
~~higher levels~~

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Patronage of harmful  
alternative systems



# Economic challenges

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Poverty perhaps the greatest  
disease of mankind

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Low purchasing power of the Naira

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Unemployment

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Unfavourable investment climate on  
health

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Low returns on investment

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High cost of care

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Political  
challenges

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Lack of political will

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Inadequate funding

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Lack of confidence by  
leaders in PHC

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Policy sumersaults

# Human resources for health

Inadequate  
numbers

maldistribut  
ion

Brain drain

Diminishing  
numbers of  
new trainees

Adequacy of  
training

Upskilling  
and  
professional  
development  
issues

# Technological challenges

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Poor infrastructure

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Lack of local manufacture of plant, equipment, drugs and vaccines

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Lack of maintenance

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Availability of basic tools

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Power issues

Service  
delivery  
y  
challenges

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Emphasis on curative care

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Structured towards high  
opportunity cost for clients

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Little focus on client  
rights

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Health worker focus

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Safety issues

# Business survival characteri stics

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It is known that many businesses easily fold up and become extinct because of

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financial insolvency,

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poor management and lack of innovation.

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Current example of business and products that have gone under include Kodak and the Nokia 3310 phone

## Business survival characteristics (2)

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First such organizations can scan and shape the future. They are able to project, deliver products and services people require.

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As public health businesspeople, we must think of the changing demographics, climate change, disease epidemiology, particularly non-communicable diseases and the wider determinants of health.

## Business survival characteristics (3)

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their ability to innovate and create products and services for the future

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large data bases of reliable credible information online for example with respect to genomics of the Nigerian citizen and personalized medicine?  
Big data may be the next gold mine.

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The future is “pregnant” and waiting to be delivered of near impossibilities for public health experts who dare to be creative and innovative.



## Business survival characteristics (4)

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prepare their human resources for the future. The required skills, training, expectations and potential outcomes are proposed in advance.

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There is a culture of experimentation in such places and failure is not punished.

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A good example is the people involved in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning

# Business survival characteristics (5)

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Businesses that survive also pay adequate attention to the competition.

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No business can remain a monopoly for life and even patents expire.

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The top telephone companies continue to improve and watch how their competitors are performing.

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Public health space has many players and experts whose purposes may be at variance with us and profess to be equivalent or better than us.

## **Essential business skills of public health physicians**

Leadership skills are very important if public health is to be a very successful business.

We tend to focus primarily on technical skills.

Leadership focusses on the long-term goals of a business.

# Leadership

Good is the enemy of Great -Jim  
Collins 2001

Level 5 leadership is needed to  
transform institutions

Humility +fierce resolve (will) to  
produce results

## **Level 5 Executive**

Builds enduring  
greatness through

A Paradoxical blend  
of humility and  
professional will

Needed to bring about  
transformation

**LEVEL 5**

## **LEVEL 5 EXECUTIVE**

Builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will.

**LEVEL 4**

## **EFFECTIVE LEADER**

Catalyzes commitment to and vigorous pursuit of a clear and compelling vision, stimulating higher performance standards.

**LEVEL 3**

## **COMPETENT MANAGER**

Organizes people and resources toward the effective and efficient pursuit of pre-determined objectives.

**LEVEL 2**

## **CONTRIBUTING TEAM MEMBER**

Contributes individual capabilities to the achievement of group objectives and works effectively with others in a group setting.

**LEVEL 1**

## **HIGHLY CAPABLE INDIVIDUAL**

# High ethical and moral standards

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are required of leaders of business, who must be persons of proven integrity.



Funds available in the public health space are often from the citizenry, international partners and willing donors which must be accounted for.



A good name is better than silver or gold

# Financial literacy

Most business decisions are simply financial, whether it is about recruitment, payment of bills, travel, or research.

We should be knowledgeable about financial management.

In addition, we should be able to read financial statements, forecasting, mergers and acquisitions and perform simple financial operations.



# Team building

This is a life long pre-occupation as members join and depart from time to time and as such,

investment in coaching,

training,

mentoring,

and supportive supervision will be necessary.

# Negotiation Skills

Securing the best deals from an informed position in the best interest of the business.

It requires expertise in sales, marketing, finance, procurement, human resources, legal affairs, sourcing for funds and investments.

In negotiations, no shady deals

# Project management

Project management is the core of business whether it is about delivering interventions, outreach services or constructing

It is a summation of all aspects of the business

# Compelling client communication

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Such communication must be action-oriented, directed at

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improving health literacy and helping people take control of the wider determinants of their health.

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As public health physicians, we must learn to speak and engage with the ordinary Nigerian in simple language easy to be understood

## Recommendations

There must be a paradigm shift on several fronts, including change in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.

We must move away from thinking and seeing public health as health for the poor or health service by the government for the poor, powerless and voiceless masses.

# Create special purpose vehicles

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in the forms of consortia,  
research groups and  
professional bodies to carry on  
~~the business of public health.~~  
The Association of Public  
Health Physicians of Nigeria  
should take the lead in this.

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Need to show the profitable  
value of public health on the  
economic wellbeing of the  
~~country.~~

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New skills in health economics,  
funds management.

# Enlarged scope of Training

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to include health economics and practical exposure to methods of running viable businesses and improving financial literacy.

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The training must include financial literacy, financial forecasting, managing business organizations and project management.

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At the onset of such training, we may need to partner with specialists in health economics and the financial sector till we have public health physicians who are experts in the field

# Research

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Research should now have some focus on cost-benefit and ROI in Nigeria.

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Large well conducted studies are needed



# Advocacy

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Never ending advocacy

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Close partnership and collaboration with Local Government

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Dynamic and compelling web presence

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Regular columns in leading newspapers.

# Removing the challenges to PHC delivery

- **Socio/ economic**

- Good governance
- Empowerment of the people
- Functional health insurance

- **Political**

- Ensure adequate funding
- Community ownership/ management
- Create favourable investment climate

# Removing the challenges to PHC delivery (2)

## • **Service delivery**

- Restructure to be safe
- Promote clients rights
- Courtesy at service points
- Increased accountability

## • **Technological**

- Functional easy to maintain buildings
- Availability of basic tools
- Local manufacture of vaccines, drugs and diagnostics

# Removing the challenges to PHC delivery (3)

- **Human resources for health**
- Better compensation, work and living conditions
- Training
- Motivation and Incentives
- More accountability

# Modelling

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Appropriate business behaviour in all our undertakings: clinics, ward rounds, journal clubs and postings at both teacher and trainee levels.

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We should not be absentee trainers jumping from one conference or gathering to the other

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Residents must not focus only on examinations and remain untrainable.

# CEO thinking and behaviour

The Head of Department should begin to function like the chief executive officer (CEO) of the business venture called Community Health Department.

Power to hire and fire

Income generation

# Conclusion

- **Public health works.**
- **It holds the key to long life, wellbeing and productivity.**
- **We should take ownership and give it its place of pride in Nigeria.**

## Conclusion (2)

- **We must all by appropriate behaviour, training, competencies and right attitude push the boundaries to make public health our business,**
- **and indeed a profitable business for the health and good of Nigerians.**



# Closing prayers

- **May we all become successful public health business people**
- **May we deliver more effective PHC services in Nigeria**

# Appreciation

- I remain deeply grateful to the President and members of the executive of the Association of Public Health Physicians of Nigeria and the Ogun State Chapter

# Appreciation (2)

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- Prof M.C. Asuzu,
- Professor A. O. Osibogun
- Professor O.H. Okojie.
- Prof. A. T. Onajole,

# Appreciation (3)

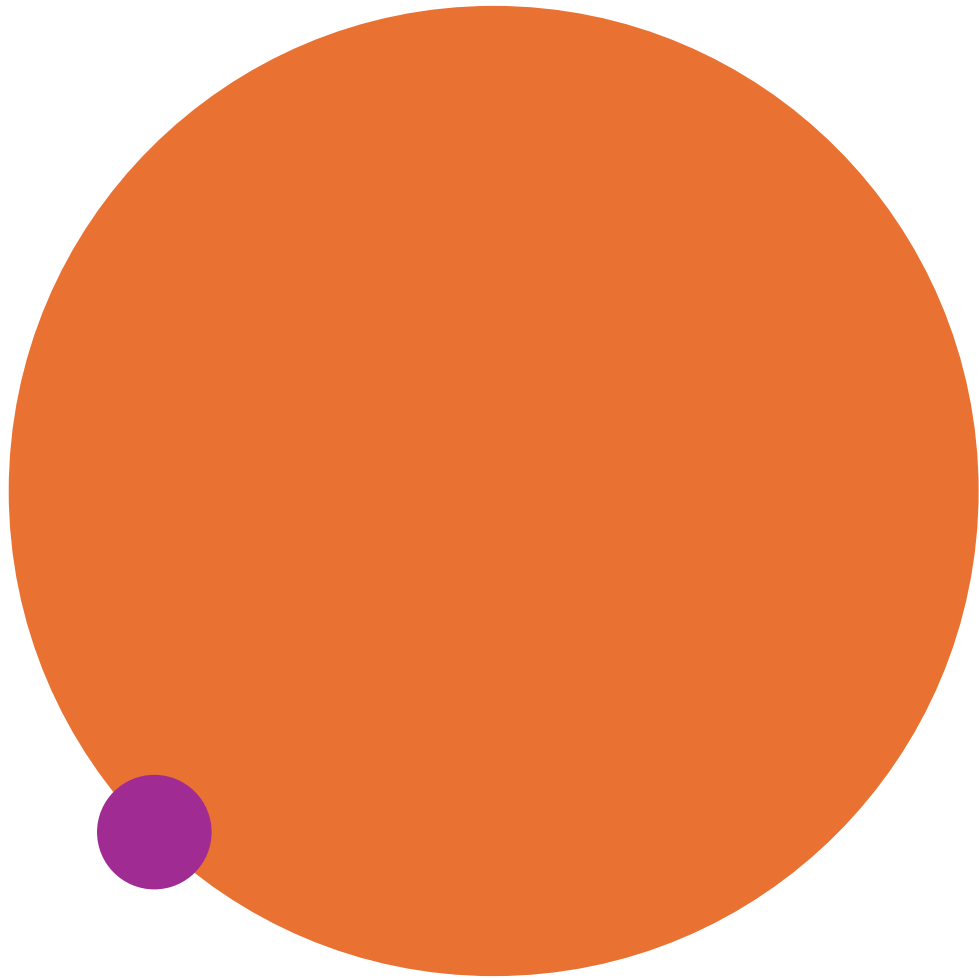
- I am grateful to the management
- and staff of the office of the Vice-Chancellor of Lagos State University of Science and Technology, Ikorodu for their cooperation.

# Appreciation (4)

- I remain deeply indebted and grateful to my dear wife, Morenike
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# Appreciation (5)

- Above all, the glory and honour be to the Lord Jesus Christ my saviour for His grace so abundantly given to me.



• **Thank you**

