



SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH PROFESSIONALS OF NIGERIA

STATEMENT BY SPHPN ON COVID-19

The Society for Public Health Professionals of Nigeria (SPHPN), the umbrella body for all professional groups working in public health in Nigeria, is a major stakeholder in public health in Nigeria. We are an affiliate member of the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA). We issue this statement as part of our contributions to the control of the corona virus pandemic.

The corona virus is a new virus to humanity and therefore there is no previous protection in humans against this germ. It has now spread to 199 countries and the World Health Organization (WHO) reports that 741,907 persons have been infected with 35,337 deaths worldwide by the end of the 29th of March 2020. It is spread through close contacts (droplet) with those who have the virus and by touching contaminated surfaces. The incubation period is up to 14 days. As of 29th of March, 2020, the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has reported 111 confirmed cases, although testing is limited. Most of the confirmed cases have occurred in persons who travelled from countries experiencing the outbreak of the virus but there is some evidence that community transmission is now occurring in the country. Confirmed cases have been reported in many states. The continuing spread of the pandemic in Nigeria calls for concern and concerted efforts by all.

SPHPN observes with great interest the actions of governments at various levels, the Federal Ministry of Health and the NCDC and the private sector, including the intervention fund by the Central Bank of Nigeria and the private sector.

We admonish that efforts be ramped up to expand testing capacity all over the country so that anyone with symptoms or meeting testing criteria can be tested so that the extent of spread can be known and be used for planning. Funding should be made available to stimulate local production of essential items such as sanitizers, face masks, ventilators and other medications necessary for the care of infected persons; as well as for research. Facilities for isolation should be expanded and emergency ones created by converting suitable public facilities. Adequate protection, training, protection and motivation of all health workers should be ensured. Members of the community are advised to obey instructions issued by public health authorities including staying at home, practise of social distancing, avoiding large gatherings, washing their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based sanitizers, avoid spreading false information, and quarantine themselves if they have recently returned from any high risk country and maintain a high level of hygiene. Governments should institute actions to deal with the social and economic effects of the pandemic. Appropriate communication in various languages should be strengthened including the use of electronic media.

As a body, we have been involved through our members in contact tracing, surveillance, public health education and care of infected persons; and will do this better still and in fuller and better organized collaboration with the NCDC, FMOH and the state governments. We are very hopeful that in no distant time, the county will stem the tide and end the transmission of corona virus in Nigeria.

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