



WEST AFRICAN POSTGRADUATE COLLEGE OF MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENCE (WAPCMLS) NIGERIA CHAPTER (LAGOS 2023 CONFERENCE/AGM)

CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT: C/o Dr Toyosi Y. Raheem, Molecular Biology & Biotechnology Dept., NIMR, Yaba-Lagos. Email: wapcmlsconference2022@gmail.com

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COMMUNIQUE

RELEASED AT THE END OF HER MAIDEN NATIONAL CONFERENCE HELD BETWEEN THE 13TH AND 16TH OF JUNE 2023 AT THE NIGERIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL RESEARCH (NIMR), YABA, LAGOS, LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA BY THE WEST AFRICAN POSTGRADUATE COLLEGE OF MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENCE (WAPCMLS), NIGERIAN CHAPTER

INTRODUCTION

The Conference brought together all Nigerian Fellows of the College (within and outside) and other expert scientists involved in the Science and Production of Animal and Human Vaccines to discuss Human Vaccine Production in Nigeria: The Politics, Policies, and Projections. Discussants reiterated the fact that investment in Research and Development in the area of vaccine, biological and pharmaceutical production should be viewed in the light of health security rather than a mere commercial affair. The Conference recognized the importance of local vaccine manufacture as the most important tool for self-sufficiency for Nigeria and all Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC) with large populations. Among the themes and subthemes discussed by participants at the Conference were: Human vaccine production in Nigeria: The politics, policies, and Projections; Vaccine Production in Nigeria: Any prospect?; Addressing Future Pandemics: COVID-19 Experience; Resources for Vaccine Development and Production in Nigeria; Paradigm shifts in Medical Laboratory Science and Practice: Implications for the Future; and How Prepared Are Medical Laboratory Science Professionals for Paradigm Shift in Practice. The keynote speaker was Dr. Simon Agwale, the Chief Executive Officer of Innovative Biotech Nigeria/USA Inc. and other Lead papers were delivered by erudite scholars that included Prof. Oyewale Tomori, a foremost Virologist and former Vice Chancellor, Redeemer University; Prof. S.O. Odewumi, renowned Professor of Transport, Planning and Policy, Lagos State University, Lagos; Prof. S. A. Omilabu, Research Director, College of Medicine, University of Lagos while Prof. Abdulsalami Nasidi, Pioneer Director/CEO, NCDC; Prof. Dennis Agbonlahor, Former Vice Chancellor, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma; Prof M. F. Useh, a former Dean of Faculty of Allied Medical Sciences, University of Calabar, Nigeria; and Dr. Solomon Chollom, a UK based Nigerian Virologist also made various presentations on topics surrounding the theme.

The Conference noted with utmost disappointment that Nigeria with a population of about 215 million people and with unparalleled potential is currently not listed among Human Vaccine manufacturers in the World. The participants noted the failed attempts by the Federal Government to revamp the Federal Vaccine Production Laboratory at Yaba, Lagos shut down in 1991, and the ill-fated take off of the Biovaccines Production Facility despite the Federal Government's commitment of N10billion to set it up. Among the areas of challenges faced by the take-off of human vaccine production efforts in Nigeria identified by the Conference were: innovative financing, enabling local and regional regulatory capacity to assure quality, critical technical elements including skill development, technology transfer, product development, partnership, good manufacturing practice, appropriate facility design and establishment, and poor accountability and transparency. Another important factor identified was an overwhelming reliance on foreign countries for human vaccine production and supply. An expanded manpower development plan for Medical Laboratory Science was discussed extensively to address this weakness.

The Conference congratulated President Bola Tinubu on his success at the last Presidential election and wish him a bright future, good health, and strength to lead Nigeria from a Third World country to a First World country. We pray he puts health sector among his topmost priorities.

RESOLUTIONS

Based on the various observations listed above, the Conference resolved and recommended the following:

1. Enhance collaborative approach between, the Public and Private sectors of the economy and the academia to ensure the immediate take-off of human vaccine development in Nigeria and enhance the technology and volume of animal vaccine produced.

PUBLIC SECTOR

The Conference called on the Federal Government to:

- a) develop implementable and achievable policies and enabling environment to guide the establishment of human vaccine laboratories in Nigeria.
- b) support NAFDAC's good regulatory job
- c) provide reasonable political direction and funding for the construction of Vaccine and Biological production Laboratories in Nigeria (public and private)
- d) Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovations to sponsor Research & Development in our tertiary institutions to discover and develop potential candidate vaccine molecules.
- e) reactivate the National Institute for Vaccine and Biologicals Production (NIVBS), which was initiated in 1997.

PRIVATE SECTOR

- a) Federal Government to identify and support competent Biomanufacturing companies in the health sector to see human vaccine production as a viable and profitable venture and to invest in it

- b) Recommended private sector companies to collaborate with the Government to evolve sustainable financial models to successfully finance the construction of vaccine production laboratories with the private companies holding the controlling shares.
- c) Provide advance procurement and Tax relief to potential Vaccine and Biological manufacturers in the country.

THE ACADEMIA

- a) Federal Government to increase budgetary allocation to promote high-tech research and a renewed commitment to the search and discovery of competent vaccine-candidate antigens.
- b) Conference stoutly advocated effective communication of scientific research outcomes to the community. “Gown to Town” advocacy.
- c) Conference called on the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Medical Laboratory Science Council of Nigeria (MLSCN) to work together to transform the 5-year Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science Programme to a 6-year Doctor of Medical Laboratory Science Programme by Nigerian Universities
- d) Training institutions accredited by the West African Postgraduate College of Medical Laboratory Science to expedite the commencement of the training of Fellows in Nigeria to produce specialist medical laboratory scientists urgently required in Nigeria to improve the provision of medical laboratory services to the benefit of Nigerians.

OUR PROJECTION

It is our firm hope and belief that Nigeria, learning from the COVID-19 experience, should be listed among human vaccine producers in Africa in the next two to five years to optimize our preparedness for future pandemics. Hence, there is a need for harmony among all healthcare professionals involved in vaccine production in the country for sustainable vaccine production.



Prof. Anietie Moses, PhD, FWAPCMLS
Chairman
West African Postgraduate College of Medical Laboratory Science,
Nigeria chapter