



Executive Summary of WACP Press statement on Covid 19

The West African College of Physicians WACP was established in 1976 and It is an association of medical specialists in the the disciplines of Community Health, Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Laboratory Medicine made up of its major specialties of Anatomical Pathology, Chemical Pathology, Haematology and Medical Microbiology. Paediatrics and Psychiatry

College commends the national governments in the Sub Region for the steps that they have taken so far in each country to mitigate the pandemic:

These includes the programs on palliatives taken to ameliorate the impact of lockdown on vulnerable population groups, vamping up of the capacities for surveillance, diagnosis and clinical care of infected persons, and the motivational packages of incentive offered to Healthcare workers(HCWs). The latter include provision of life insurance/indemnity cover, salary enhancements and, above all, the commitment to provision of work materials including personal protective equipment (PPE) required to assure the protection of HCWs.

There has also been the regular appreciation and commendation of the efforts of HCWs in their life saving endeavors/services during these trying times.

The College is also desirous of thanking the many corporate bodies, development partners, donor agencies, overseas governments and friends of the sub region and Africa, and philanthropic/public spirited individuals and organizations, far too numerous to mention individually, that we are aware have made contributions and pledges in cash and/or kind towards assisting with the response to the pandemic in the sub region.

In addition, the WACP would want to commend the understanding, support and resilience of the citizens in the sub region, without whose understanding and cooperation, the efforts of the governments, individuals and organizations/corporate bodies would have failed.

The WACP believes that it is possible to fashion out a common framework within which country-specific, and even state/district/city-specific responses could be worked out. The College also believes that it would be possible within the common framework, to work out schemes or programs of assistance for those countries and neighbors that are less endowed. This is in the spirit of good neighborliness. We all indeed need one another, and no country should think that it has all, and could do without help.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS IN WEST AFRICA

However, the WACP has a few areas of concern that she considers it necessary to further draw the attention of the public and governments of Chapter countries to. This is in the College's desire to further contribute to the strengthening of the response to the pandemic in the sub region in particular, and in the continent and larger world in general. These concerns are as follows:

- 1 The availability of diagnostic centers and reagents for testing for the confirmation of suspected cases
- 2 The protection of healthcare workers
- 3 The need for the development of a common framework for the guidance of further response to the pandemic in the sub region
- 4 The need to build on the opportunities offered by the pandemic, and resulting good will, to strengthen the public health capacity and infrastructure in Chapter countries
- 5 Related to and coupled with #4, is the need to secure the establishment, at strategic locations, of critical care centers for the clinical care of severely ill persons with HIDs including COVID-19, and Ebola and Lassa fevers
- 6 Building on the opportunities offered by the pandemic for development of surveillance and research infrastructure and capacity, which are in dire need for effective public health response to outbreaks in the sub region; and
- 7 The conscious need for national governments to be aware of the ready availability of Chapter Members and Fellows to draw on for national and sub regional services in meeting the medical manpower needs of the response to the pandemic in potential and actual areas of want in countries of the sub region.

The WACP wholeheartedly supports the recommendations of governments in the sub region that everyone should wear facemasks while out in public or in transit, maintain physical distancing and practice regular and frequent hand hygiene practices. These measures should be continued and remain our best bet to reduce transmission and slow the spread of the virus in our communities and must be sustained over a period of time to be effective while the pandemic lasts.

Social distancing needs to be accompanied by comprehensive social support measures to ensure that people can comply without adverse effects on their livelihoods

There is an urgent need for countries to accelerate and expand testing including community testing for a more accurate understanding of the pandemic in the region and providing reliable evidence for the prioritisation of next actions.

Any attempt to relax the lockdown measures should be taken with extreme caution and should be informed by COVID-19 testing and contact tracing capacity, and the availability of isolation facilities as we anticipate rapidly spreading community transmission.

Therefore, there is need for community engagement and social mobilization using a network of community health workers, local health centres, community leaders and structures for infection prevention and control as well as risk communication.

There is a need to plan now how to ensure that the drugs and vaccines that are being developed are accessible to all in our region.

I would want to thank you on behalf of the College and, through you and your principals/agencies, assure the public and national governments in the sub region of the **willingness of the WACP to offer her professional services and to assist where and when help is needed towards the successful mitigation of the pandemic in the sub region**. Indeed, just as was done during the recent outbreak of Ebola, the WACP has directed country Chapters to form taskforces/groups for the purpose of actively interfacing with national and sub national governments to make their services available.

We look forward to a fruitful relationship in rising to the challenge of the pandemic.

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Dr Albert Akpalu, FWACP Secretary-General, West African College of Physicians

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