

7th Annual Scientific Conference of the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research, Yaba, Lagos November 08-10th, 2016

COMMUNIQUE

PREAMBLE

The Nigerian Institute of Medical Research hosted researchers within and outside the Institute on her 7th Annual Scientific Conference from 6th to 10th November, 2016. The highlights of the conference were; a pre-conference workshop on Scientific paper writing 6th-7th, main conference 8th-10th and the 6th distinguished lecture series which was titled *"That she may survive and bring forth an AIDS-free generation"*. The conference over the years has been a platform where researchers disseminate their research findings, showcase their research activities and network for future collaborations.

The Conference was Theme: ***"ACHIEVING HEALTH-RELATED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION"*** and the Sub-Themes:

- Innovative Diagnostics in the Treatment of HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria.
- The Re-emergence of Viral Haemorrhagic Fevers in West Africa.
- Improving Maternal and Child Health using Skilled Attendants at Childbirth: the Role of Evidence.

The Conference had both local and international participants with a total of 32 participants at the pre-conference workshop, 167 registered participants at the main conference, and 320 people at the 6th Distinguished Lecture. The participants at the conference, who included the Representatives of the Federal Minister of Health and the, Lagos State Commissioner for Health, were from:

- Research institutions
- Universities (federal, state and private)
- Federal and Lagos State Ministry of Health
- National Academy of Science
- Registration Councils in the Min of Health

- National and International Donor Agencies
- Industry (Pharma and Diagnostic)
- Members of the Press

TECHNICAL AND INTERACTIVE SESSIONS

These sessions involved plenaries, keynote speakers, oral and e-poster presentations, round tables and symposium.

Highlights from the sessions

- Emphasizes on the importance of research in national development. It was stated that it is a vital channel through which information can be obtained to help make decisions that are effective, appropriate and timely.
- Strengthening of the Health Systems- In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria, strengthening of the Health Systems is necessary in order to achieve universal health coverage. It was recommended that the health system in Nigeria should not only ensure healthcare delivery and prevention, it should also include health equity to promote human dignity and rights. NIMR however is playing an active role in fulfilling Goal 3(Good Health and Well-being) of the SDGs. Importance of building research capacity in Nigeria- this would pave way for innovations; rising standards in health care would develop so as to focus on diseases of public health importance in order to achieve the SDGs.
- Multidisciplinary approach to research- Multidisciplinary research is an ideal platform for the development of innovative ideas. Collaborative efforts across research agencies, shared limited infrastructure and cost-effective studies should be encouraged across all spectrum. This would involve multidisciplinary research and collaboration with industry and communities which requires a certain mindset, openness, trust and integrity. Likewise, team work was

stated as essential for effective research. However, for effective team work it is important that the team adopts dialogue as a means of communicating/resolving issues rather than debating. It was also advised that establishing a memorandum of understanding before the onset of a group research is vital. Research in the area of Malaria has shown gradually increasing resistance to all the classes of insecticide, over the years. Although multiple aetiologies and risk factors were found associated with sudden death in Nigeria, the most important risk factor is Hypertension.

- There is need for increased advocacy in education and economic empowerment for the girl child and women of reproductive age group, so that they can make appropriate choices for their health and that of their children.
- A rise in the incidence of sexual assault in our environment has been noted. Though males are increasingly being assaulted, females victims are still in the majority.
- In the area of TB/HIV where NIMR plays a vital role it was also established that
 - NIMR has a Mother to Child Transmission (MTCT) of HIV rate of less than 1%, comparable with the best practices in the world.
 - Delayed switching of HIV infected patients who are adherent to antiretroviral treatment (ART) has led to increased development of HIV drug resistant mutation.
 - While AIDS related events continue to be a major source of mortality among HIV infected individuals, it is however important for clinicians to be aware of other underlying non-HIV-related conditions. It is suggested that these conditions should be aggressively screened for, monitored and treated.
 - Intestinal parasites such as *Giardia lamblia* and *Entamoeba histolytica* were found to be more prevalent among HIV infected patients and constitute potential opportunistic infections with attendant increased morbidity and mortality.
 - Despite a fairly good uptake of contraception, unplanned pregnancy rate is high among HIV positive adults.

- Loss to follow up is common in programs directed at prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV in Nigeria. There is therefore a need for innovative and effective counselling techniques especially during PMTCT services to curb the trend.
- HIV infected adolescents had significantly lower growth parameters and delayed pubertal development than their HIV uninfected counterparts.
- Women were found to present to clinic at earlier stages of TB infection, than men. The uptake of the use of Isoniazid for prevention of TB (IPT) is still low in Nigeria.

Recommendations

- There is need for more research to validate the effect of insecticide resistance, and also identify other cost-effective compounds that can be used as insecticides.
- Effective vector control is required to sustain the gains made against malaria.
- The Nigerian government should take absolute control of the national HIV response as well as invest in research and innovation.
- Identify the causes of the disconnect between contraceptive awareness and uptake as this will help to address the issue of unplanned pregnancies and contribute to the reduction of HIV transmission in adult and paediatric populations.
- Growth and pubertal development should be routinely assessed in adolescents living with HIV to aid timely detection of problems and institution of appropriate corrective measures.
- There should be continuous monitoring and evaluation, and implementation of appropriate policies to sustain achieved gains made in health care.
- Nigeria needs to improve the practice of performing autopsy on the dead.
- There is a need for the Federal Ministry of Health (and other stakeholders) to provide copies of the Standardized Treatment

Guidelines to all health facilities and put in place strategies that will ensure compliance.

- More than 50% of NIMR's budget should be used on research.
- Commitment to achieving the SDGs by the target year of 2030 should be priority.