

Call to Action: Diabetes and NCDs in Nigeria – Perspectives, Challenges and the Way Forward

24 August 2017

'Diabetes and NCDs in Nigeria – Perspectives, Challenges and the Way Forward', held in Abuja, Nigeria on August 23-24 2017, explored the challenge that diabetes and other NCDs pose to Nigeria's economy and the health and well-being of its citizens.

The participants adopted the following Declaration and urgent Call to Action:

Diabetes is one of the major health and development challenges of the 21st century. An estimated 415 million people in the world had diabetes in 2015, a number expected to rise to 642 million in 2040. Diabetes is both a result of and contributor to increasing social and economic inequality globally.

Today more than 14 million people with diabetes live in sub-Saharan Africa, with figures expected to double by 2040. Prevalence in Nigeria was 2.8% in 2015, or more than 1.56 million people. This translates to 1 in 53 Nigerians suffering from diabetes, with a large chunk - about 60% - remaining undiagnosed.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancers continue to pose major health challenges, particularly in developing countries. More than 80% of the burden of NCDs is borne in the low and middle income countries, including Nigeria.

Deaths from NCDs are largely preventable if there is political will from the government and adequate response from the health system.

Lifestyle modifications by individuals and public health policies including legislation on tobacco have been found to have positive and lasting effects on cardiovascular disease. Health education and screening can detect members of the public who are suffering from NCDs or at risk of the diseases.

Nigeria and other developing countries are presently in transition from communicable to non-communicable diseases. There is a need to accord higher priority to NCDs in order to disarm the looming time bomb.

We express grave concern about the growing crisis of diabetes and NCDs in Nigeria. We appreciate that the Federal Ministry of Health has taken steps to review the National Strategic Plan of action on Prevention and Control of NCDs, and to be more responsive to national aspirations and better aligned to the National Strategic Health Development Plan (NSHDP).

Whereas Nigeria is a signatory to the 2011 UN political declaration on the prevention and control of NCDs and the World Health Assembly of May 2013 Global Action Plan for the prevention and control of NCDs 2013 -2020, and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development goals adopted by member states of the United Nations in September 2015 specifically included the reduction of premature deaths from NCDs.

And whereas the Agenda 2063 development framework for Africa adopted in Johannesburg in 2015 compelled all actors in Africa to implement the first 10 year implementation plan of the 2063 agenda.

We the undersigned resolve to commit ourselves and our resources to support and help initiatives to stem the scourge of diabetes. These include providing health information systems, advocacy and collaboration with communities and other stakeholders.

We the undersigned recommend that government and its agencies at all levels, Federal and State Ministries of health, non-governmental organizations, non-state actors, civil society organizations and religious bodies stand up for action against the scourge of NCDs as follows:

- All levels of government (federal, state and local) strengthen their performance in their integral role in the prevention and control of NCDs.
- Increase funding to the health sector – Nigeria spends far less on healthcare than the minimum recommended by WHO. Funding for data collection and primary health care is especially urgent.
- Ensure access to NCD care in Nigeria. Easy access to affordable and effective drugs and devices is key. Government and her agencies must deal specifically with the issue of fake and expired drugs flooding the Nigerian market now. Cold storage facilities for drugs like insulin must be affected by addressing power generation and supply and cold chains.
- Address NCD risk factors including sedentary lifestyle, unhealthy diet, overweight, tobacco and alcohol use via legislation, health education and advocacy.
- Intensify implementation of Universal Health Care and encourage the integration of prevention and control strategies for NCDs into existing programs such as those controlling TB, HIV/AIDs and malaria.