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WEST AFRICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS

48th Annual General & Scientific Meeting

28th – 30th Oct 2024 (Hybrid format)

COMMUNIQUE

PREAMBLE

- The 48th Annual General and Scientific Meeting of the West African College of Physicians, hosted by The Nigeria chapter, held from 28th to 30th October 2024 at NICON Luxury Hotel, Abuja, Nigeria, with events on the 30th of October 2024 taking place at the WACP hotel and Conference centre, Gaduwa, Abuja, Nigeria. This was also a "green AGSM" which, among other things, used biodegradable, recycled materials for the conference bags.
- The Local Organizing Committee (LOC) Chairman and College Vice-President Nigeria Chapter, Dr Aboi Jeremiah Madaki gave his welcome address in which he urged all to maximize the opportunities of being together at the conference, and expressed the hope that governments will utilize the recommendations.
- College President Dr Rose Jallah Macauley addressed Members and Fellows in which she encouraged high standards of practice and training despite the challenging economic situation.
- The representative of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof Muhammad Ali Pate, delivered a speech and thereafter declared the ceremony open on behalf of the government of Nigeria. The representative of the Special Adviser on Health to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr Salma Ibrahim Anas, also gave a short speech on the topic: "Health system in Nigeria: The government perspective".
- Sister Colleges namely the West African College of Surgeons, Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons, Royal College of Pathologists and the West African Postgraduate College of Pharmacy presented goodwill messages. The

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representative of the Director General of West African Health Organization (WAHO) also gave a notable goodwill message stressing regional cooperation. They all expressed the importance of collaboration and pledged their continuous support for the College.

- Special awards were presented to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; Dr Temitope Ilori, Director General National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA); and Dr Kelechi Ohiri, Director General National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA).
- A Medical Outreach was organized at Kuje Area Council, Abuja on Saturday 26th October 2024 between 9:00am to 4:00pm at the Science Primary School, Kuje. A total of 746 community members were attended to, in the form of medical consultation, screening, deworming, enrolment into health insurance, dispensing and referrals.
- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Royal College of Physicians (UK) and the Faculty of Internal Medicine WACP, covering partnership in training and faculty development.
- The Theme of the Conference: "Improving Health Systems in The West African Region: Opportunities and challenges" and subthemes "National Health Insurance Schemes as a strategy for Universal Health Coverage"; Artificial Intelligence in Medical Practice – How prepared is the West African subregion; Lifestyle, culture and the control of NCDs, were explored in the keynote addresses, symposia, plenary sessions, oral presentations, and poster presentations.
- A total of 1,175 participants (761 in-person and 414 virtual) attended the meeting from eight chapters, and these included 47 accompanying persons.
- The academic activities of the meeting included the following:
 - The Mabayoje College Lecture, titled "Improving Patient Care and Health System Through Defragmented Care" was delivered by Dr Lawrence Akin Moses (Nigeria) on behalf of the Faculty of Family Medicine.
 - The Training symposium focussed on "Artificial Intelligence: Implications for Medical Education in West Africa" with oral presentations by Dr George Aquah (Ghana), Dr Manmak Mamven (Nigeria), and Dr Olufemi Ogunrinde (Nigeria).
 - o The College Symposium presented by the Faculty of Paediatrics with the Theme

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"The impact of Lifestyles, Culture, and modifiable NCDs in children and adolescents"

Topics covered in the symposium included: Overview of the burden of NCDs in childhood and adolescents in the subregion by **Dr Christiana Osei-Yeboah** (Ghana), Lifestyles, Culture and NCDs in children and adolescents by **Dr Joanah Ikobah** (Nigeria), NCDs in children and adolescents by **Dr Nma Jiya** (Nigeria), and Mitigation of NCDs in children and adolescents by **Dr Readon Ideh** (Nigeria).

- Scientific sessions were held in six parallel streams and included 50 oral and 28 poster presentations relevant to the theme and subthemes.
- A plenary session highlighted Integrative Medicine and its applications to clinical practice in the subregion.
- A total of 321 new Fellows and 383 new Members in the medical specialties of Community Medicine, Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Laboratory Medicine, Paediatrics & Psychiatry were inducted at the opening ceremony. A total of 19 Fellows were also inducted during the closing ceremony including the induction of Dr Ibiwari Damiete Erekosima as the first International Fellow.
- College prizes were presented to 22 Members and Fellows.
- In-person participants enjoyed social events including a welcome cocktail, a city tour and the conference dinner.
- The grand opening of the WACOP Hotel and Conference Centre took place on the 30th of October 2024, and the plaque was unveiled by the Director General, WAHO, **Dr Melchior A.J.C. Aissi**.
- The closing ceremony also witnessed the installation of the new College President,
 Dr Mourtalla M. Ka, who will assume office on 1st January 2025.

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OBSERVATIONS

- Health systems in the subregion show some strengths in the recent scaling up of high-impact interventions, increasing investments in health and efforts to change top-down approaches with community engagement and involvement.
- Health systems in the region have similar challenges of low budgetary allocation to health, weak implementation of health policies, inefficient management of funds and accountability, poor penetration of health insurance programmes, adversely affecting health governance in the sub-region.
- Need to increase the distribution of trained specialists. Additionally, training in specific subspecialties should be increased and tailored to the health needs of the region.
- A multidisciplinary approach to emergency response is required to build community resistance and resilience in the region.
- Lifestyles, Culture and modifiable NCDs impact the health of children and adolescents in the subregion positively and negatively. The region needs to adopt a comprehensive approach to address inimical practices that negatively impact the health of children and adolescents, while reinforcing positive behaviour. This strategy would be one approach to address the rapidly increasing prevalence of NCDs in West Africa.
- The introduction of structured medical education in the management of NCDs such as diabetes mellitus and hypertension, is a vital tool in the control of NCDs.
- Technological aids including Short Message Service (SMS) have been proven to improve medication adherence and blood pressure control in hypertension.
- There is a need for the inclusion of substance abuse education in curricula of schools at appropriate ages to be taught by teachers not healthcare professionals.
- Providing defragmented care is critical to improving the quality of health care and increasing patient satisfaction which are non-negotiable for improving health systems.
- Artificial Intelligence can automate data entry, reduce errors, and facilitate real-time data analysis. It can be used in healthcare and training, but wisely and critically bearing in mind the ethical challenges.
- Al adoption for Medical Education in West Africa is challenged by limited infrastructure and technological resources, high cost of implementation, lack of faculty training, and



absence of regulatory frameworks.

- Many AI training models are not based on datasets from the region which has implications for the applicability of results in medical practice in West Africa.
- The LOC innovatively ensured the conference was hosted as a "green conference" by adopting approaches to reduce carbon footprint.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to Governments, Development Partners and other stakeholders

- Strengthen the implementation of high-impact health interventions and adoption of Health Insurance Programmes for Universal Health Coverage.
- Increase budgetary provisions and overall investment for health in line with the Abuja declaration.
- Enhance financial accountability and transparency to positively impact health governance and implementation of policies in response to health needs.
- Explore public-private partnerships to enhance the deployment of technologybased solutions in the health sector.
- Commission the College to develop and deploy the ethical framework governing the application of technology-based solutions in the sub-region's health sector.
- Increase financial support urgently to enable the College to train and retain specialists to meet the rapidly changing health needs in the region.

Recommendations to College

- Conceptualize a 'Train, Retain and Equitably Distribute' (TRED) strategy to enhance the production of specialists for the subregion.
- Develop additional subspecialty training programmes to meet the health needs of the subregion.
- Develop structured medical education in the management of NCDs such as diabetes mellitus and hypertension, and advocate the use in health systems.
- Advocate for inclusion of substance abuse education in curricula of schools at appropriate ages to be taught by teachers, not health professionals.
- Develop clear policies to guide the training and ethical application of AI by trainees and trainers.
- Facilitate the adoption of skills needed by Fellows and Members to practice defragmented care.

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RESOLUTIONS

The West African College of Physicians is committed to:

- Advocate for increased government investments in health to achieve universal health coverage.
- Increase the output of trained specialists within the region as part of efforts to cope with the losses from Health workforce migration, as College anticipates financial support from governments and stakeholders in the region.
- Collaborate with other stakeholders to manage the flow and impact of health workforce migration from the subregion.
- Develop and expand subspecialty training specific to the West African subregion to meet the health needs of the peoples of West Africa.
- Develop a comprehensive AI policy to guide ethical AI use by trainees and trainers in medical practice and education.

Abuja, October 30th, 2024

Dr Wachinou Ablo Prudence Secretary-General WACP