



COMMUNIQUE OF THE PARASITOLOGY AND PUBLIC HEALTH SOCIETY OF NIGERIA [PPSN] AT THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY AND 47TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE SOCIETY HELD FROM 10TH – 14TH OCTOBER, 2023 AT GRAND AMARI HOTELS AND RESORT, OWERRI, IMO STATE

The Parasitology and Public Health Society of Nigeria (PPSN) held her 50th anniversary and 47th annual conference at the Grand Amari Hotels and Resort, Owerri from 10th – 14th October 2023. The conference was attended by over 590 registered participants from the six geo-political zones in the country and diaspora. The theme of the conference, **PPSN @ 50: Global Control, Elimination and Eradication of Public Health Diseases - A Reflection**, was the topic for the 50th anniversary colloquium. The colloquium was moderated by Prof Ekanem Ikpi Braide *fpdsn, FAS, OFR*, former President PPSN, former Vice Chancellor of CRUTECH and FULafia & President Nigerian Academy of Science, while Prof Uche Amazigo, Chair, National Steering Committee on NTDs, FMOH, Abuja & former Director, APOC, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; and Prof Luke Edungbola, former Deputy Vice Chancellor, Unilorin & former Editor-In-Chief, NJP; were the lead discussants on the topic.

The keynote addresses, **Roles and Collaborations of PPSN and NGDOs in the fight against Diseases** was delivered by Dr. Francisca Olamiju, Executive Director, MITOSATH & Chair, Coalition of Health NGDOs in Nigeria while Dr Amadou Garba of WHO Geneva presented his lecture on **NTD RoadMap and WHO New Guidelines on Control and Elimination of Schistosomiasis**. Similarly, an **overview of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) in Nigeria** was presented by Mr. Fatai Oyediran, the National Coordinator, NTDs Department, Federal Ministry of Health, Abuja, Nigeria.

The LOC Chair, Prof. Chinyere Ukaga welcomed all members and special guests to the milestone ceremony of the society.

The President of the Society, Prof. Sammy Olufemi Sam-Wobo *fzsn, fpdsn* in his address chronicled the history of the society up to the 50th anniversary. He gave a preview of the expectations at the conference including investiture of fellows and special recognition awards to deserving members who had served the society meritoriously in the past. He urged all members to participate actively in all the conference programmes, particularly the technical sessions.

While declaring the ceremony open, the Chairman of the occasion; Prof. (Chief) Alex D. W. Acholonu former President of the Society (1980-1981) was full of excitement and joy to participate in the 50th anniversary of the society. He pointed out that “we should forget the negative past, do well in the present and get ready or prepare for the future”.

In his presentation Mr. Fatai Oyediran, (FMOH) noted that Nigeria accounts for about 25% of NTDs which are called diseases of the poor. He added that all States of the Country are endemic for one or more diseases. The impact of NTD's he stated included organ damages, Impact on new born, maternal/child birth complications, poor nutritional status among people, morbidity and mortality. On the major progress attained so far in NTD's Elimination efforts in Nigeria, he revealed that about 39.5 million people in 20 States and FCT have had ivermectin administration, eradication of Guinea worm disease in 2013, large scale efforts in IDM NTDs case finding and management across all states in Nigeria and landed project in integrated Mental Health.

In her lecture, Dr Francisca Olamiju emphasized that an effective collaboration between PPSN and NGDOs is needed in the campaign against diseases as can be seen in the case of *Loa Loa*. She noted that the essential steps towards the interpretation of the transmission of NTDs include: mapping, mass administration of medicines and verification. She also outlined workable activities that can be employed by members to achieve maximum results in the fight against NTD's and other infections. These include:

- ✓ Collaborations between PPSN and SNTDs at the grassroots should be boosted to aid the compilation of data on the current status of NTD's in our regions.

- ✓ Operational research designs should be a benchmark for any research procedure to proffer solution to NTD's in our Society.
- ✓ Annual NTD meetings should be organised to prioritize peculiar issues in our communities
- ✓ NTD related research topics should be designed for our B.Sc. students in the universities to obtain real time data.
- ✓ Attendance of national and international conferences is a positive step towards academic/research excellence.

In her opening remarks at the colloquium, the moderator, Prof. Ekanem Braide emphasized on the importance of Parasitologists in the control, elimination and eradication of parasitic diseases. She chronicled past efforts in the battle against NTDs in the country and the current trend where paucity of funds impugned achievable goals. She added that PPSN is made up of special people with special talents and encouraged all to stay relevant to purpose.

Prof. Uche Amazigo In her discussion acknowledged Nigerians who played monumental roles in APOC including Agnes, an Oncho-victim from Enugu State. She added that the objective of APOC was to establish sustainable onchocerciasis control programmes. She highlighted the history, structure, functions of CDIs, the successes of APOC, the challenges and the way forward with focus on young scientists on carrying out relevant community driven research. She established that the Community played excellent role in APOC's success story today.

The second discourse was anchored by Prof. Luke Edungbola. He talked on the origin of the name - Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) which is credited to him. He gave an excellent, comprehensive and motivating rundown on his research in guinea worm control and elimination in Nigeria. Working with a cohort, the Nigeria Guinea Eradication Programme (NIGEP) focused on development of strategies and policies, working with communities towards guinea worm control using different approaches such as health education, guinea worm extraction, water filtration and treatment (safe water) which aided the elimination process in Nigeria. This scheme which he tagged integrated approach was employed to obtain resounding result and could be replicated in the elimination of other NTDs.

Other events that took place at the 47th Annual Conference and 50th Anniversary Celebration included

- i. Anniversary Dinner
- ii. Investiture of New Fellows
- iii. Conferment of Awards of Recognition on deserving members of the society
- iv. Launching of the 50th Anniversary book
- v. Technical sessions – Oral and Poster
- vi. Presentation of Prizes to Technical Sessions' Winners
- vii. AGBM

Recommendations

At the end of the events, the following recommendations were made in line with the conference theme, discourses and AGBM

1. PPSN to develop an MOU with the Federal Ministry of Health
2. Need for improvement in the 30% coverage of Morbidity Management and Disability Prevention [MMDP] by the Government (Federal and State) and partners
3. Prioritization of projects on onchocerciasis, lymphatic filariasis and schistosomiasis by all stakeholders
4. Government (Federal and State) to improve funding of disease control/elimination projects
5. Partners should intensify and improve on commitments entered into.
6. Need to secure more partners (NGDOs) in the NTD fight

7. Collaboration with academics and other stakeholders by FMOH and Partners
8. Annual NTD meetings should be organised to prioritise peculiar issues in our communities
9. NTD related research topics should be designed for our students in the universities to obtain real time data.
10. Attendance of national and international conferences as a positive step towards academic/research excellence.
11. Research should be used to convince the Government on the elimination of parasitic diseases
12. Integrated control strategy should be employed in research and deployed towards elimination of NTDs
13. Young scientists to focus more on community need-driven research
14. Community involvement/engagement in research should be encouraged.
15. Discipline among the leaders in all spheres of public health is paramount.

The AGBM agreed that for effective and efficient conference delivery, the Onsite Registration desk at our conferences is collapsed. Subsequently, **there shall be no onsite registration from the next conference. The 2024 Conference shall hold in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.**

Prof. Sammy Olufemi Sam-Wobo *fzsn, fppsn*
President, PPSN

Prof. Mobolanle Oniya *fppsn*
Chair, Conference Management Committee