



ACADEMY OF MEDICINE SPECIALTIES OF NIGERIA

Draft Statement from the Rapid Response Committee of the Academy of Medicine Specialties on the Public Health Implications of the Current Mpox Outbreak in African Countries, Including Nigeria

The Rapid Response Committee of the Academy of Medicine Specialties is gravely concerned about the ongoing Mpox outbreak across several African countries, including Nigeria. This outbreak constitutes a significant public health challenge and requires immediate and coordinated action at both national and regional levels. The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have both declared Mpox a public health emergency of continental security (PHECS) in Africa and a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) on August 13th and 14th respectively.

Key Issues and Concerns:

- **Increased Transmission Rates:** The recent resurgence of Mpox has led to increased transmission rates in both urban and rural communities.
- **Public Awareness and Education:** There is very minimal public enlightenment campaigns and other forms of awareness creation on the occurrence, risk factors, prevention and treatment of Mpox. Misinformation and stigma associated with the disease constitute a hindrance to efforts to manage the outbreak effectively.
- **Healthcare System Strain:** The outbreak has placed additional strain on already overburdened healthcare systems in many African countries such as Nigeria. Limited resources, including diagnostic tools, personal protective equipment (PPE), and treatment options, are compounding the challenges faced by healthcare providers.
- **Vaccine Accessibility and Distribution:** Ensuring equitable access to vaccines is crucial to controlling the outbreak. We note with appreciation that Nigeria has become the first country in Africa to receive 10,000 doses of vaccine as donation from the United States Government.
- **Research and Development:** There is almost no research and development efforts on Mpox in Nigeria.
- **International Collaboration:** The Mpox outbreak is not confined to individual countries; it constitutes a regional and global threat. We urge for stronger international collaboration and support to enhance the capacities of affected countries to manage the outbreak effectively.

Recommendations:

- **Coordinated actions:** We call for immediate, coordinated actions by governments, public health authorities, and international partners to contain the outbreak and minimize its impact on public health. The federal government should establish a national advisory task force on Mpox that should be led by the presidency for high level coordination of the national Mpox response.
- **Enhanced Surveillance and rapid response mechanisms:** Strengthen surveillance systems to detect and respond to new cases quickly. This includes integrating Mpox monitoring into existing health surveillance frameworks. These will help to contain the virus and prevent further transmission.

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- **Increased Public awareness:** There is an urgent need to improve public awareness and understanding of Mpox, particularly regarding its symptoms, modes of transmission, and preventive measures. Billboards and radio jingles should be deployed in all the states and Federal Capital Territory to inform the public and provide constant health education messages that will protect the people against the risk factors of the Mpox using simple messages.
- **Community Engagement:** The federal, state and local governments should engage communities in the response efforts, ensuring they are informed, involved, and empowered to take preventive actions.
- **Private sector involvement:** The organised private sector and civil society organisations should be mobilised by the federal and state governments to play major roles in the response to Mpox.
- **Resource Mobilization:** Mobilize resources to support affected healthcare systems, including the provision of PPE, diagnostic tools, and treatment options. Ensure that the limited vaccines are distributed equitably, with a focus on the most vulnerable populations.
- **Research and Development:** There is a critical need for robust research and data collection to better understand the epidemiology of mpox in African region. This includes the identification of potential animal reservoirs, the role of human behaviour in transmission, and the effectiveness of current interventions. Current Mpox studies in Nigeria should be expanded to include implementation research to address the outbreak. The federal and state governments with their partners should invest in ongoing research to close knowledge gaps about Mpox in Nigeria. This research should guide the development of more effective prevention and treatment strategies. Also, Good Participatory Practices (GPP) that involve communities, co-designing of the research and co-interpretation of findings should be at the forefront of these efforts, ensuring that community voices guide the response.
- **Vaccine deployment:** The Federal government, through the NCDC and NPHCDA should prioritize the distribution of Mpox vaccine to the most affected and at-risk populations in the country.

Conclusion:

The current mpox outbreak poses a serious public health threat that requires urgent attention. The Rapid Response Committee of the Academy of Medicine Specialties stands ready to support efforts to manage and contain the outbreak. We call on stakeholders to work together to protect the health and well-being of all affected communities.

This statement is issued in the interest of public health and security.

Signed September 5th 2024

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