

NIGERIAN SOCIETY FOR MICROBIOLOGY (NSM) Abuja, Nigeria

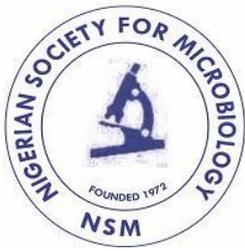
NSM Press Release on COVID -19 in Nigeria

Background

1. That SARS–CoV–2 virus, a novel positively-stranded enveloped RNA virus first discovered and reported in Wuhan City of China in December 2019, causes the COVID-19 disease. It is a positively stranded RNA virus. The rapid spread of the virus worldwide is of major concern more especially in developing nation like Nigeria.
2. That the disease is significant because human-to-human transmission of SARS–CoV–2 and its pandemic attribute creates panic with terrible consequence of the welfare of humans and global economy.
3. Epidemiologically, the primary source of SARS–CoV–2 transmissions to humans remains unknown. However, in addition to human-to-human transmission of the virus by travellers from epidemic countries, community spread of the virus has been reported globally, has contributed to the total number currently recorded in Nigeria (at least three), and could prove damaging if control measures are not adequately enforced.

The Nigerian situation

4. That Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and religious country and the most populated in Africa. It also has inadequate healthcare facilities and few experts. Therefore, extra measures are required to educate/sensitize this diverse nation in order to curb the menace of COVID-19 in our communities through prevention.
5. We greatly applaud the many right steps of the federal and state governments in implementing strategies that will reduce contamination by the virus.
6. However, it can be postulated that with more testing capacity, the number of patients requiring medical care may increase exponentially in the weeks to come, putting pressure on our thin public health and health care system and potentially, elevated rates of hospitalisation and deaths.
7. That this may create panic, and in such scenario coupled with the absence of a breakthrough in treatment yet, nonpharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) will serve as the most important response strategy in attempting to delay viral spread and to reduce disease impact.



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Recommendations

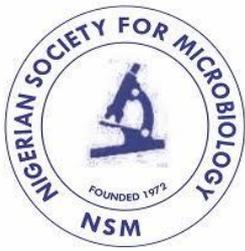
8. Population-wide social distancing of the entire population plus other interventions (eg, home self-isolation, school and business closures) is strongly advised. These policies may be required for long periods to avoid rebound viral transmission
9. The implementation of infection control measures within hospitals is crucial to protect health care workers, maintain adequate work force levels and to prevent hospital outbreak that eventually goes to the community epidemic.
10. Trust between people and institutions must be maintained or re-established so that local communities and individual subjects adhere to medical advice.
11. It is essential to control panic and minimize the potential for social disruption that is typical of any global epidemic event.
12. This is an opportunity for the scientist community to interact with each other globally in all areas associated with the disease so that a good understanding of the pandemic will be disclosed.
13. Exaggerated infection control measures may be pernicious as they increase frustration among the population, undermine the economy, and evoke a false feeling of safety.

NSM Position

14. That the Society, through its array of microbiologist, molecular biologist and virologists offer their services towards fighting this virus, research and otherwise.
15. And because drug repurposing is at the forefront of finding a medical solution to slow down the virus in those infected, the society would (could?) galvanize her members, especially the natural product experts, towards making their products available for testing in the government's quest to stop the spread of the virus.
16. That doing this, and many more positive measures already taken, Nigeria could again receive the plaudits as a foremost contributor to disease eradication, just like we achieved with the Ebola disease.

Conclusion

17. This is the right time to be humane and all stakeholders' hands- including ours- must be on deck to combat the global pandemic caused by SARS-CoV-2. We must adhere to



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decisions and directives from authorities so that panic will be avoided and rational attitude will not be lost. May God help us.

18. Thank you.

NSM COVID-19 EDUCATIONAL NOTES

High risk of infection

- ✓ Persons in areas with ongoing local transmission,
- ✓ Healthcare workers caring for patients with COVID-19,
- ✓ Close contacts of infected persons
- ✓ Travelers returning from locations where local spread has been reported

High risk of COVID-19–related complications

Adults including older and persons who have serious underlying health conditions (eg, heart disease, diabetes, lung disease)

Known Facts about the Virus, SARS–CoV–2

1. It causes dry cough.
2. It affects the respiratory tract of on entry into an individual
3. It survives in aerosols for over 3 hours. It could stay longer in an environment where the air is continually circulated e.g. an air-conditioned environment.
4. According to a recent study corroborated by the CDC, the virus survives on a cardboard for 24 hours and metal surfaces for up to 3-4 days if these surfaces are left un-sanitized.
5. It can survive on fabric for 6- 12 hours.

Treatment and Prevention of COVID-19

- [1] No specific antiviral treatment is currently recommended.
- [2] Supportive treatment is recommended to help alleviate symptoms.
- [3] No vaccine is currently available for SARS-CoV-2.
- [4] **Avoidance is the principal method of deterrence.**



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Measures for prevention of viral respiratory infections

- Wash hands with soap and water thoroughly for at least 30 seconds.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are unavailable, especially when individuals are in movement.
- Individuals should avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Individuals should avoid close contact with sick people.
- Sick people should stay at home
- Coughs and sneezes should be covered with a tissue, followed by appropriate disposal and flushing down a water closet.
- Frequently touched objects and surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected regularly.

