



Perspective

Asian Pacific Journal of Tropical Medicine

journal homepage: www.apjtm.org

doi: 10.4103/1995–7645.279650

Impact Factor: 1.77

Public health preparedness towards COVID–19 outbreak in Nigeria

Jelili Olaide Mustapha^{1✉}, Kamoru Ademola Adedokun², Idris Abdullahi Nasir³¹Biological Science Department, Faculty of Science, University of Alberta, Edmonton T6G 2E9, Alberta, Canada²Department of Oral Pathology, DUH, King Saud University Medical City, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia³Department of Medical Laboratory Science, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, College of Medical Sciences, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria

The 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), formerly called novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV), was discovered in December 2019. This outbreak was declared a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) on 30th January 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO). The WHO announced US\$ 675 million fund to strengthen China and nations with weaker health systems in combating COVID-19. By 18th February 2020, there has been 73 332 confirmed cases with one case in Egypt[1].

Due to its cosmopolitan nature, Nigeria is prone to COVID-19 outbreak if stringent public health measures are not put in place. In July 2014, a Liberian diplomat who had Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) entered the country through the Murtala Mohammed Airport, Lagos[2]. Subsequently, 19 laboratory confirmed cases of EVD were identified with 42.1% fatality rate, which contributed to declaring EVD as PHEIC by the WHO[2]. These emphasize the need to have well equipped diagnostic laboratories, trained diagnosticians and public health measures to forestall the occurrence of COVID-19 epidemic in Nigeria.

According to the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), the National Reference Laboratory, Abuja, Northcentral Nigeria appeared to be equipped with technical and human resources required to diagnose COVID-19[3]. Unconfirmed reports also have it that Irrua Specialist Hospital (ISTH), South-south Nigeria, and Central Research Laboratory, Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH), Southwest Nigeria have the capacity to diagnose COVID-19. During the 2014 EVD outbreak, LUTH was used for the preliminary investigation of EVD before confirmatory diagnosis was made by a WHO collaborating centre in Dakar, Senegal[2]. The NCDC, which is the nations' public health institute, has also put in place some public health measures against COVID-19 through its website (www.ncdc.gov.ng) and *via* Twitter handle @NCDCgov to ensure the general public stay updated about the recent global

epidemic prevention and management strategies against COVID-19.

The NCDC has developed the Surveillance and Outbreak Response Management System (SORMAS) for case-based reporting for epidemic prone diseases in 11 states of the federation, 'SitAware' and 'Tatafo' for event-based surveillance and incident management among NCDC staff members, and Mobile Strengthening Epidemic Response Systems (mSers) for aggregate reporting[4]. The establishment of National Incident Coordination Centre (ICC) for outbreak preparedness and response activities enables NCDC to gather intelligence reports daily, identify impending public health threats and ensure that outbreak responses are well coordinated and controlled[5].

Through partnership with various national, regional and international organizations, NCDC has been able to strengthen its preparedness through donor funding for upgrading of its selected laboratory networks and staff capacity development for outbreak preparedness and responses[5]. In addition, building on the successes recorded by Nigeria in the fight against the 2014 EVD outbreak, recent Lassa fever and Monkeypox virus outbreaks, it is believed that Nigeria will be able to manage viral outbreaks. With the restructuring that has happened at the NCDC, it is believe that Nigeria will be able to curtail the spread of COVID-19 if the virus eventually finds its way into the country.

✉To whom correspondence may be addressed. E-mail: jelili@ualberta.ca

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-ShareAlike 4.0 License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

For reprints contact: reprints@medknow.com

©2020 Asian Pacific Journal of Tropical Medicine Produced by Wolters Kluwer-Medknow. All rights reserved.

How to cite this article: Mustapha JO, Adedokun KA, Nasir IA. Public health preparedness towards COVID-19 outbreak in Nigeria. Asian Pac J Trop Med 2020; 13(5): 197-198.

Article history: Received 18 February 2020 Revision 20 February 2020
Accepted 25 February 2020 Available online 2 March 2020

Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

Authors' contributions

MJO conceptualized and designed the study. MJO also drafted the first manuscript. AKA designed and reviewed the final manuscript for intellectual content. INA participated in the study, designed and reviewed the final manuscript for intellectual content. All authors are responsible for the integrity of the data.

References

- [1] World Health Organization (WHO). *Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) situation reports*. 2020. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>[Accessed on 18 February 2020].
- [2] Otu A, Ameh S, Osifo-Dawodu E, Alade E, Ekuri S, Idris J. An account of the Ebola virus disease outbreak in Nigeria: Implications and lessons learnt. *BMC Public Health* 2017; **18**(3). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-017-4535-x>.
- [3] Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). Public health advisory to Nigerians on novel coronavirus (#3). 2020. [Online]. Available from: <https://ncdc.gov.ng/news/222/3rd-february-2020%7C-public-health-advisory-to-nigerians-on-novel-coronavirus-%28%23%29>[Accessed on 17 February 2020].
- [4] Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). 2018 NCDC Annual report. 2019. [Online]. Available from: <https://ncdc.gov.ng/themes/common/files/annualreports/18803aba62a09ada4ad84c8db76c22ea.pdf>[Accessed on 17 February 2020].
- [5] Njidda A, Oyebanji O, Obasanya J, Ojo O, Adedeji A, Mba N, et al. The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control. *BMJ Global Health* 2018; **3**(2): e000712.