



Steering the rudder in uncharted waters

From the Editor



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As the Pharmacists Council of Nigeria (PCN) prepares to commence the training of Patent and Proprietary Medicines Vendors (PPMVs) in accordance with the new accreditation curriculum, the IntegratE project and other development partners supported the Council in developing a comprehensive training package.

This package includes the participants' guide, job aids, training manuals and facilitator's reference and covers topics from family planning, malaria, nutrition and other primary healthcare services. The Council also commenced discussion with some Schools and Colleges of Health technology in the pilot states to position them as training centres for the step-down of the accreditation training of PPMVs for sustainability.

As the project continues to make impact across the pilot states, several testimonies have been received from both the clients and providers who now have their skills improved in providing family planning services including counselling and referral.

This edition captures a few of these testimonies to further underscore the importance of engaging these cadres of providers to expand primary healthcare services especially in difficult-to-reach communities.



Institutionalising the Mandatory Entry Point Accreditation Training of PPMVs

The Pharmacists Council of Nigeria (PCN) with support from IntegratE project and Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) convened a 2-day meeting with the Provosts and Heads of Pharmacy technology departments of some selected Schools of Health Technology who are currently training Pharmacy technicians, to discuss the tiered accreditation system and possible engagement of the schools in the training of PPMVs in line with the accreditation curriculum.

The meeting discussed the readiness and availability of the schools to provide this training. Estimated cost of training and the state of facilities in those schools were equally discussed.

A total of 10 Schools and Colleges of Health Technology (both public and private) across Lagos, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina were present.

The Pharmacists Council of Nigeria will subsequently undertake facility visits to the schools that have shown interest to access the infrastructure and sign Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) before commencing the training.



Meeting with Provosts and Heads of schools of Health Technology on the accreditation training of PPMVs



Finalisation of PPMV Accreditation Training Manual in Readiness for the Training of the First Cohort



Stakeholders' meeting to review and validate the new PPMV training manual developed in line with the accreditation curriculum

Preparatory to the commencement of the roll out of the tiered accreditation training by PCN, the IntegratE project worked with the Council, other implementing partners and relevant departments of FMOH to convene a stakeholders' meeting to review and validate the training manual of PPMVs which was developed in line with the tiered accreditation curriculum covering all topics from **family planning, malaria, pneumonia, diarrhea** as well as regulatory and operational procedures.

Partners that supported the review of the manuals include, **Pathfinder International, PPFN, CHAI, MSION, SFH, PSN-PACFaH, SHOPS** etc.

Also, representatives of **The National Association of Patent and Proprietary Medicine Dealers (NAPPMED), Lagos State Medicine Dealers' Association (LSMDA), Directors of Pharmaceutical Services** in Lagos and Kaduna, and some **Civil Society Organisations** like **Association for Advancement of Family Planning (AAFP)** were present.

The inputs from the meeting were reviewed and incorporated in the final draft submitted to PCN by the end of June.



Strengthening the Regulatory and Quality Assurance System of PCN



PCN Directors at the co-creation workshop on digitisation of PCN operations and design of QA/QI system

Expanding PPMV's scope of operation comes with the challenge of quality control, supervision and regulation.

In order to develop systems that will strengthen the regulatory framework and quality assurance systems for both Community Pharmacies and PPMVs' operation, the project through one of its partners, **PharmAccess Foundation**, conducted a capacity assessment of the ICT capability, regulatory and quality assurance systems of the **Pharmacists Council of Nigeria (PCN)** to identify gaps, develop a regulatory/quality framework and tools for quality assurance, and automate these processes for improved operational efficiency of the council.

These assessments culminated in a co-design workshop involving all Heads of units and Directors of PCN to share preliminary findings from the assessment of the QA system and ICT capabilities, review the draft regulatory framework for strengthening QA/QI processes and the tiered accreditation system, and reach a consensus on key recommendations and next steps in finalising the framework and upgrading the website and portals.

At the end of the workshop, key priority areas for QA/QI and digitisation were agreed on with the council and the timelines for completion of the tasks were discussed.

Expanding Access to Reproductive Health Through the Private Retail Sector in Kano, Kaduna, Katsina and Rivers States

Spotlight Story:

Mr. Mallam is a PPMV trained in Kaduna on reproductive health counseling and referral. His village, Mandadi, has no public or private health facility and he is the only health provider serving the community. Therefore, village residents rely on Mr. Mallam for their FP health information and services, for which Mr. Mallam notes there is great demand for in the village.

"I received hearty appreciation from my clients", he says. "One client and her husband gave me a live chicken as a gift for referring them to a primary health center where a healthcare worker could provide an implant. Before now, they were only aware of exclusive breastfeeding as a contraceptive method and this method continued to fail them".



In 2018, the **Clinton Health Access Initiative**, funded by **Global Affairs, Canada** and a large anonymous donor, launched a Sexual and Reproductive Health program in partnership with the **Federal Ministry of Health and State Ministries of Health** in Kano, Kaduna Katsina and Rivers states. Building off previous successful interventions in maternal and neonatal health and post-partum family planning, the program seeks to improve access to reproductive health services for women and girls to reduce unintended pregnancies and ultimately address Nigeria's alarming rates of maternal mortality.

Recognising that the majority of Nigerians seek family planning services from the private sector, CHAI's approach includes empowering **Patent and Proprietary Medicine Vendors (PPMVs)** and **Community Pharmacists (CPs)** as frontline providers and information points for family planning services. CHAI, in collaboration with the **Federal Ministry of Health, and State Ministries in Health** in Kano, Kaduna Katsina and Rivers states trained **1,119** PPMVs and CPs at the end of 2018. The two-day training program included topics on gender-sensitive and adolescent-friendly reproductive healthcare services, including family planning counselling.

The training program also established referral linkages between private providers and health facilities for reproductive health information and services that are not currently provided in the retail private sector, such as long-acting reversible contraceptives. In the first five months after the training, from January to May 2019, trained PPMVs and CPs counselled over **66,000** clients on reproductive health, referring over 16,000 to health facilities for additional family planning information or services. Of the clients referred, CHAI was able to confirm that at least **9,586** clients, or 60%, completed the referral at the health facility. The majority of clients that completed referrals at health facilities took up a family planning method, with **4,857 (50%)** choosing an injectable contraceptive and **2,870 (30%)** choosing an implant.

Throughout 2019 and 2020, CHAI will work with the Government to continue to monitor, learn from and expand this approach to improve access to reproductive health services through the private retail sector.

Making Family Planning Services Readily Accessible

The Story of Precious Ileogben

Precious Ileogben is a 28-year-old unmarried mother of two children living in Agege- one of the suburbs of Lagos, Nigeria. She works as a sales girl in a supermarket in her community and earns a little income barely enough to sustain her and her children. She has a boyfriend whom she claims likes women a lot but decided to remain in the relationship because he supports her financially to augment her income and sends money for the upkeep of her children.

She engages in regular unprotected sex with her boyfriend and has had a number of abortions with the last one conducted in May, 2019. She had heard about family planning but never really thought about taking up a method until she visited a Community Pharmacist, John Adewole, who was among the few pharmacists recently trained on comprehensive Family Planning services including implants and injectable contraceptives.

After adequate counselling on all methods of contraception, Precious decided to go for a longer term method to avoid unwanted pregnancy and put her mind to rest.

She opted for Implanon NXT which offers protection against unwanted pregnancy for a period of 3 years. She was so excited to receive these services from a trained Community Pharmacist and promised to inform her friends to come for family planning at the community



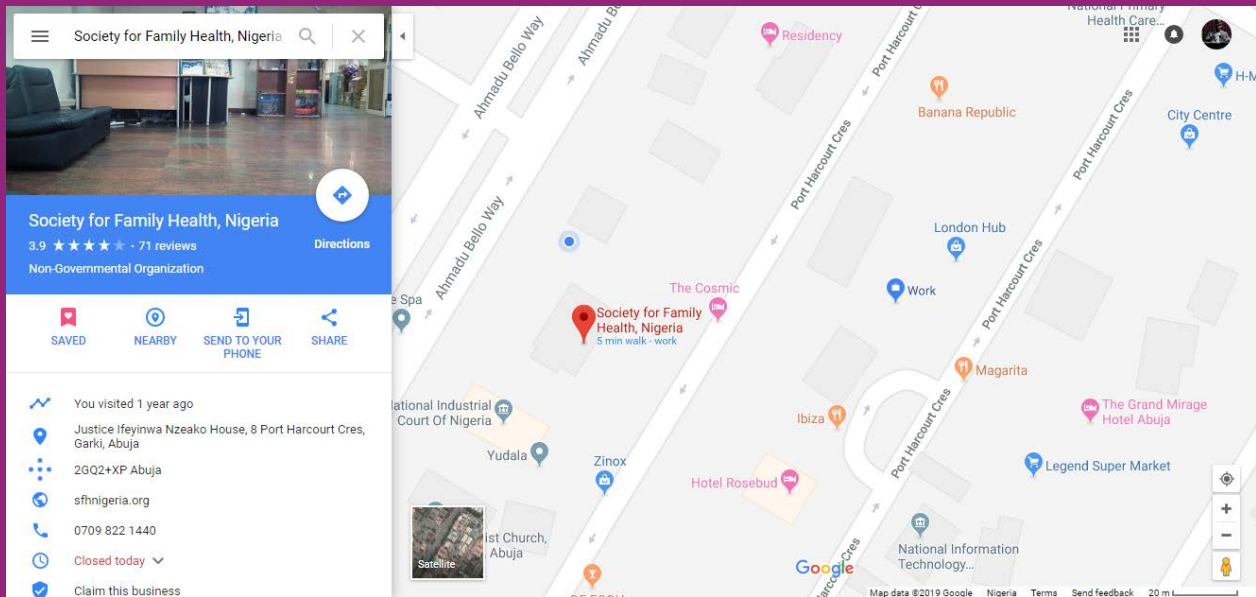
pharmacy. In her own words written in pidgin English, she said (referring to the pharmacist):


“Na this bros dey advise me on wetin I go do with my life and health, na him advise me say make I prevent myself against unwanted pregnancy and today na one of the happiest day of my life. Bros don do pregnancy test, HIV test for me today, and everything negative before he insert the implant for me, I go advise my other friends, make dem come do wetin I do, as person wey get unwanted pregnancy now go suffer.”

The IntegratE project has been building the capacities of Community Pharmacists and Patent and Proprietary Medicines Vendors in Lagos and Kaduna States to provide quality family planning services, counselling and referral to ensure that young women such as Precious who are living in rural and hard-to-reach communities have ready access to family planning services when they need them to avoid unwanted pregnancies and abortion, which may lead to death.

Working with the community pharmacists to expand access to contraceptives services is one of the innovative ways to support the state government in its effort to increase contraceptive prevalent rate to 74% and avert over 2.6million unintended pregnancies.

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EXPANDING ACCESS TO QUALITY FAMILY PLANNING AND PRIMARY HEALTHCARE SERVICES