



Paediatric
Association of
Nigeria (PAN)

THE 54TH ANNUAL GENERAL AND SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE OF THE PAEDIATRIC ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (PANCONF 2023) HELD IN AKURE, ONDO STATE, FROM 17th TO 21st JANUARY 2023

COMMUNIQUÉ

The 54th Annual General Meeting and Scientific Conference of the Paediatric Association of Nigeria (PAN), tagged PANCONF Akure 2023 held between 17th and 21st of January 2023 at the International Culture and Events Centre (The Dome), Akure, Ondo State.

The theme of the conference was **Optimizing Child Healthcare in Nigeria Despite Current Socio-economic Challenges**. The sub-themes were **Brain Drain and the Nigerian Child: The Paradox, Problems, and Prospects of Possible Solutions; Disruptors of Child Survival Strategies: Insecurity, Displacements and Pandemics; Combating the Scourge of Sickle Cell Disease in Nigeria: Treatment Guidelines and Vaccine Preventive Strategies; Childhood Community Acquired Pneumonia: Treatment Guidelines and Vaccine Preventive Strategies**.

The opening ceremony held on 18th January 2023 under the Chairmanship of Dr (Chief) Adewunmi Abitoye, former Minister of State for Education and currently Medical Director, Abitoye Medical Centre, Akure. The ceremony was declared open by the Special Guest of Honour, the Executive Governor of Ondo State, His Excellency Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Akeredolu who was represented by the Honourable Commissioner of Health Dr Banji Awolowo Ajaka. Other dignitaries in attendance were the wife of the Governor of Ondo State, Arabinrin Betty Anyanwu-Akeredolu, the Vice Chancellor, Federal University of Technology, Akure, represented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Phillip Oguntunde, the Medical Director of Federal Medical Center Owo, Dr. Liasu Adeagbo, the Chief Medical Director of Federal Teaching Hospital, Ido-Ekiti, Professor Adekunle Ajayi, and the Chairman Nigeria Medical Association Ondo State, Dr. Omosehin Adeyemi- Osowe. The Royal Father of the day was His Royal Majesty, Oba Aladetoyinbo Ogunlade Aladelusi CFR, Odundun II, the Deji and Paramount Ruler of Akure Kingdom.

There were about 400 local and international participants and invited speakers that included, paediatricians, paediatric residents, nurses, pharmacists, officials of government, officials of the Federal Ministry of Health, international development partners namely UNICEF & WHO, Save the Children, civil societies, pharmaceutical companies and other health workers in the child health space. The conference featured several pre-conference activities including the training of Primary Healthcare Workers in Ondo and Ekiti States on the critical skills of Helping Babies Breathe & Essential Newborn Care (HBB/ENC) and the more advanced Neonatal Resuscitation Training (NRT) for doctors and nurses from different parts of Nigeria. These trainings are consistent with the responsibility and contributions of PAN towards improving neonatal and child health indices in Nigeria. Six other subspecialty workshops also held in the areas of child neurology, haematology-oncology, neonatal respiratory support, asthma & allergy, and infectious diseases.

The keynote address titled **Optimizing Child Healthcare in Nigeria Despite Current Socioeconomic Challenges** was delivered by **Professor Akin Osibogun**, a professor of Public Health and Epidemiology from the University of Lagos, Former Chief Medical Director, Lagos University Teaching Hospital, and currently President, National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria. The lecture illuminated the link between the conditions we live, work, and grow and the current poor child health indices in Nigeria. He recommended revitalizing primary healthcare, improving healthcare funding and strengthening the health workforce in order to address the current poor health indices.

The conference featured 17 plenary sessions, including 11 symposia, 1 panel discussion, 16 parallel scientific sessions, and 49 poster presentations. Over 180 papers were presented on various aspects of paediatrics and child health. Topics exhaustively explored during the plenary sessions included priorities in newborn health and brain drain in the health sector. Other highlights of the conference include the presentation and launching of the Child Health Policy, Pneumonia Treatment Algorithm, Neonatal Essential Care document, and BiliDx, an equipment for rapid analysis of serum bilirubin by the bedside. An eminent paediatrician, Professor Felix Akinbami, was honoured with the Dr. and Mrs. Bolaji Ajenifuja Distinguished Paediatrician Award for 2023.

The conference observed the following:

1. A recent upsurge in the exodus of health workers out of Nigeria leading to worsening health workforce to patient ratio and increased work pressure on those left behind.

2. A consistent poor funding of the Nigerian health system and over reliance on donor driven programmes resulting in persistent poor health indices.
3. Prevalent insecurity across the country resulting in the disruption of the gains made on child survival strategies such as immunization, TB and malaria control.
4. The recent pandemic and epidemics placed additional pressure on our health system thereby exposing its weakness and potential threats to national security.
5. Pneumonia is a leading cause of under-5 mortality globally and in Nigeria, with recent upsurge in antibiotic resistant causative organisms.
6. The poor state of the school health programme and adolescent health in Nigeria and its adverse effect on learning and child development.
7. Despite the high burden of sickle cell disease in Nigeria, there is no national policy on addressing it.
8. The persistent contribution of preterm births and newborn problems to the high infant morbidity and mortality in Nigeria.

The conference recommends the following:

1. Governments at all levels should prioritise the commitment of 15% of the annual budget to funding the health sector in line with the Abuja Declaration, 2001.
2. Government should create an enabling environment for health professionals in order to stem the tide of the massive exodus of health care professionals out of the country-“the brain drain syndrome”.
3. Governments at all levels should make concerted efforts at addressing the prevalent insecurity in the country and reintegrate the IDPs back into the society.
4. The Paediatric Association of Nigeria, through her subspecialties, should initiate and build national registries for common childhood illnesses in the country to establish health burdens more accurately in the nation.
5. The Paediatric Association of Nigeria should liaise with relevant partners to promote necessary technology locally to enhance quality of healthcare in the country and reduce dependence on foreign products.
6. The Government at all levels should support the development and provision of low-cost, effective, and durable technologies for the care of small and sick newborn; no effort should be spared in recruiting, training, and retaining skilled manpower for newborn care.
7. The collaboration between PAN, government, and developmental partners such as WHO, UNICEF and Save the Children should be strengthened to drive and sustain efforts to curb the high rate of preventable deaths from pneumonia, TB, and malaria in Nigeria.
8. The Paediatric Association of Nigeria is to intensify efforts in the development of treatment and management guidelines of common important childhood ailments in the country and help the government in the development of national policies. A national policy on sickle cell disease in Nigeria is urgently needed.
9. Government at all levels should strengthen the health system and particularly increase its capacity to respond adequately to epidemics and pandemics.
10. PAN should go beyond research and develop a School Health Programme Implementation Strategy from the Federal, State, LGA and ward levels.

The PAN hereby commends the Local Organizing Committee of PANCONF 2023 for a well-organized Conference, the Government, and the good people of Ondo/Ekiti States for their warm hospitality and our partners for their unflinching support given towards the success of the Conference.

Dr. Olufemi Ogunrinde
PAN President

Dr. Maria Garba
PAN Secretary