

Training Infection Prevention and Control Specialists in Nigeria

Healthcare personnel in Nigeria save lives every day and put their lives at risk when caring for patients with deadly infections, such as Ebola and Lassa fever. Infection prevention and control measures—such as isolating potentially infectious patients, improving handwashing, and using protective equipment—can keep these healthcare personnel safe. Although some hospitals in Nigeria have specialists responsible for ensuring that these measures are in place, few of these specialists are appropriately trained to serve in this role. To fill this need for training, Nigerian infection prevention and control experts are working with CDC's International Infection Control Program (IICP) in the Division of Healthcare Quality and Promotion out of the National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases and other international partners.

In response to the West African Ebola outbreak in 2014 and 2015, Exxon Mobil donated funds to the CDC Foundation to protect Nigerian healthcare personnel from infectious disease threats. As part of this effort, the College of Medicine at the University of Lagos (CMUL) finished developing Nigeria's first curriculum to train infection prevention and control specialists in March 2018. Supported by CDC experts and Project HOPE, CMUL conducted a baseline assessment of 12 health facilities in Lagos to identify infection prevention and control gaps to inform training needs, worked with Nigerian subject matter experts to develop the curriculum, and conducted a pilot of the training program.

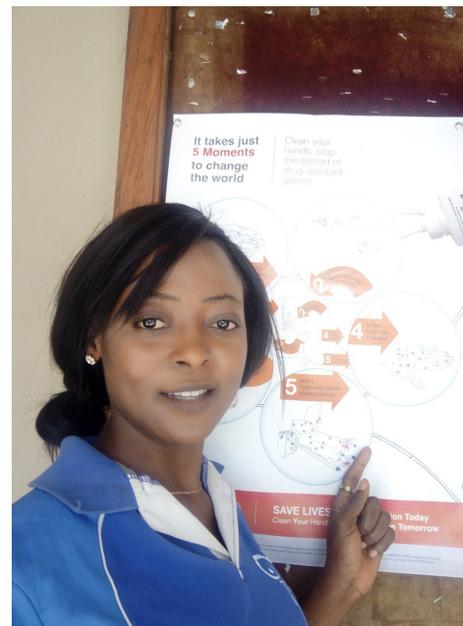
Twenty-two nurses, medical doctors, and laboratory scientists successfully completed the pilot training program in early 2018. The program guides learners through critical infection prevention and control concepts, emphasizing how diseases are transmitted in health facilities, how infection prevention and control measures can be used to

prevent disease transmission, and how to serve as a leader and advocate for an infection prevention and control program in a health facility with limited resources. The training material was presented through lectures, videos, realistic case scenarios, games, and guided group discussions, ensuring an interactive and engaging experience for participants.

Many participants left the pilot training with the knowledge and enthusiasm to start making positive changes at their hospitals. At the end of each long training day, Dr. Iyabo Kudah, the CEO of a children's hospital in Lagos, returned to her hospital to assess infection prevention and control practices using what she had learned. "We realized that we needed to have a dedicated space for cleaning, disinfection, and sterilization of our medical equipment to keep our patients and healthcare personnel safe," she said. "We have now created a Central Sterilizing Service Department."

Key stakeholders in the Nigerian health system have been enthusiastic supporters of the training program, and CMUL has agreed to use the curriculum as the basis of a formal training program, offering options for a basic infection prevention and control certificate and advanced diploma for healthcare workers. The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control has endorsed the curriculum and is discussing opportunities to make it a permanent training program, setting the foundation for a potential career path for trained full-time infection prevention and control specialists at Nigerian health facilities.

Manager of the training program, Dr. Tochi Joy Okwor, and principal investigator, Professor Folasade Ogunsola, agree that this project fills an important gap in Nigeria.



"The concepts presented opened my eyes to the importance of infection prevention and control. I now am constantly assessing risks to healthcare personnel and applying these principles as I work."

Nurse Okusanya Abiola, infection prevention and control training participant

"The dearth of specialized infection prevention and control practitioners in Nigeria has bothered me for over a decade. Most healthcare personnel have had some very basic infection prevention and control training to carry out tasks, but without appreciating the science behind it. We want infection prevention and control specialists in our course to receive very practical training that opens their eyes and minds to the everyday risks of disease transmission in their facilities," said Professor Ogunsola. CDC's International Infection Control Program works with partners around the world to help countries strengthen their capacity to prevent infections and control antibiotic resistance in healthcare settings.

