



Letter to Editor

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Nigeria is the Next Destination of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Patients Across the Globe, But the Strategic Plan for Medical Laboratories is in the Pipeline

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Nigeria had the index case of COVID-19 on 27th February, 2020 as announced by the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) [1]. It is very important to recall that the corona virus disease emanated from Hunan Seafood Market in Wuhan China as reported by the Chinese Health Authority about the mysterious cases of pneumonia on December 31, 2019 [2,3]. The index case of COVID-19 and second positive patient has been confirmed negative with the unrelenting efforts of the health professionals in Nigeria. This appears to mean that the foreigners and Nigerians can be well managed in the present COVID-19 pandemic. Little wonder the five (5) Nigerians decided to return home (2 person from UK) and the other (3 person from US) bringing the number of COVID-19 patients to eight as reported by FMoH [4]. Presently, there is no recorded death due the pandemic in Nigeria even as the tally of confirmed cases reached thirty (30) among commuters cum contact persons while the first two (2) cases have been confirmed negative and discharged. There is however, a hullabaloo by the masses of the lack of interdict on travelers by the government leading to the ban of thirteen (13) countries with high cases of COVID-19 victims [5,6]. The Countries affected by the ban are: China, Italy, Iran, South Korea, Spain, Japan, France, Germany, Norway, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Netherlands and Switzerland because they have over one thousand (1,000) cases domestically. This ban is in line with the problem shared which is not always the problem solved [7]. The masses have also called on government to close all public places

and prohibit large gathering of Nigerians for a while of which eighteen (18) states of the federation have complied including ban of religious and social activities.

COVID-19 Situation Report globally puts it at 191,127 people affected with 42% found in China, and 7,807 deaths so far counting. It is instructive to note that Uganda has not registered any case of COVID-19 out of the 54 African and 157 countries on the global list [8]. Based on the level of preparedness of Nigeria [9] as amplified by NCDC [10], it is suggestive to say that Nigeria can be the destination of COVID-19 patients across the globe. This is predicated on the capacity to manage the patients, environment and presence of chloroquine [11,12] and related products in abundance with numerous edible and herbal products in Nigeria which could be employed for better management of the victims.

While the accommodation of the COVID-19 patients would hasten cure of the viral disease, there may be another economic boost in Nigeria as Nigerians and foreigners troupe to Nigeria. However, the government should update their level of preparation and strategies to handle the cases. Such advice have been given by Chollom [13] who recommended upgrade of state epidemiological units to state Center for Disease Control, inclusion of Medical Laboratory Scientists in all committees and strategic groups by government and upgrade of diagnostic centers across the states of the country. The general government's strategic plan for the

COVID-19 is in place with the Presidential Committee in place, NCDC on her toes, various states setting up the Pandemic committees like Lagos, Enugu, Imo, Plateau to mention but a few. The Medical Laboratory Scientists known by some as Biomedical Scientists [14] have lamented their exclusion in such committees and that there is no record of upgraded laboratory facilities across Nigeria (as watched in AIT News hour of the 19th March, 2020). If today, Nigeria can build six (6) Hospitals with Medical Laboratories in the six (6) geopolitical zones with corresponding isolation centers and medical laboratories / diagnostic centers in all the states and Federal Capital Territory, then Nigeria could be the next destination of all COVID-19 patients across the globe including Nigerians in diaspora and foreigners which shall be accompanied by maximum economic boost in the country.

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