



Opinion

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# Hand Washing and Personal Hygiene among Nigerians in the face of *COVID-19* (Coronavirus)

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WHO [1] has developed hand hygiene and personal hygiene [2] for healthcare workers and general public towards disease prevention and control [3]. Hand hygiene is a very important aspect of personal hygiene to all - Health care workers (HCWs) patients, patients' relatives thereby preventing healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) [4], Nosocomial infections and the spread of emerging infectious diseases such as novel coronavirus disease (*COVID-19*) that is spreading since 8 December 2019 [5] with symptoms such as: feeling short of breath, having a cough that gets more severe over time, and a low-grade fever that gradually increases in temperature.

Nigeria joined Algeria and Egypt in the African region for the case of *COVID-19* [6] following the confirmation of coronavirus disease (*COVID-19*) in Lagos - Nigeria by the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 2020, as a result of return of an Italian citizen from Milan-Italy, there is an emergency towards prevention, control and containment of the dreaded coronavirus disease that was discovered to have emanated from Wuhan China [7]. The FMOH [8] advised all Nigerians to take care of their health and maintain hand and respiratory hygiene to protect selves and others, including their families, following the precautions below:

- a) Regular and thorough washing of hands with soap and water and use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (Hand hygiene).
- b) Maintenance of at least 5 feet distance away from anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- c) Personal social distance and avoidance of crowd especially individuals with persistent cough or sneezing
- d) Ensuring that people around you, should follow hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and other personal hygiene as

related to the mouth and nose with aid of tissue or into your sleeve at the bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

e) Do not engage in self-medication but stay home if you feel unwell with symptoms like fever, cough and difficulty in breathing, then call NCDC toll free number - 0800-970000-10 - for guidance

f) Stay informed on the latest developments about *COVID-19* through official channels on TV and Radio, including the Lagos State Ministry of Health, NCDC and Federal Ministry of Health.

With these instructions, it is pertinent to educate the masses that personal hygiene, hands hygiene and personal protective equipment like nose masks, eye goggles, face masks, hand gloves, etc. provides safety to all who are disciplined and committed to such practices in a time like this. Hand and personal hygiene should be everybody's business in such health emergency time like this ranging from students on training, patients' relatives, and patients to healthcare workers.

It has been established that improvements in hand hygiene resulted in reductions in respiratory illness thereby making hand-hygiene education a beneficial intervention [9] that could assist Nigerians to reduce disease burden that could follow a health emergency such as that of *COVID-19* using any available soap. The time for vigorous hand hygiene and personal hygiene education and practice is now for all levels of Nigerian population as *COVID-19* has no discrimination between the rich or the poor, medical or nonmedical, military or paramilitary, employed or unemployed. Nigerians have joined the global call for hand and personal hygiene for safety during the *COVID-19* pandemic as evident in some of the produced and fabricated products during the pandemic as seen in



Figures 1-3. Nigeria shall be a place to be during and after COVID-19 [10] with good hand hygiene and improvement in healthcare services.



Figure 1: Mass production of Hand Sanitizer Sprays by FSMLS, Jos Scientists.



Figure 2: Reconstructed buckets to source of Tap water and sanitizers.



Figure 3: Improvised Foot Match Tap for hand washing.

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