

REPORT OF THE MEDIA ROUNDTABLE WITH JOURNALISTS AND ADVOCATES IN COMMEMORATION OF THE HIV VACCINE AWARENESS DAY

24TH MAY 2019

Introduction: The most recent data from NAHIS report shows Nigeria HIV prevalence is on a decline from 2.8% in 2017 to 1.4% in 2018. This shows a remarkable progress made in mitigating the HIV epidemic. However, questions continue to trail the report, demanding for the explanation on this gross decline in the HIV prevalence. Again, the data shows the HIV prevalence is highest among females aged 35 – 39years (3.3%). This data also indicate the increased need for HIV prevention among young people including need for investment in HIV prevention research and roll out of proven tools like PrEP.

Globally, May 18th is set aside to commemorate on the HIV Vaccine Awareness Day. The global community recognizes the efforts of researchers, advocates and trial participants in HIV vaccine research and development. The New HIV Vaccine and Microbicides Advocacy society held a roundtable meeting with 25 journalists and advocates on the 24th of May 2019 to mark the HIV Vaccine Awareness Day and also consider the ongoing national efforts in promoting the national HIV research priority agenda. The NACA launched the HIV research priority agenda that include HIV vaccine research development and inaugurated the National HIV Research Reference Group to facilitate the implementation of the national research agenda. This meeting aligns with the objectives of NHARRG and the National HIV Research Agenda by identifying the priority areas of investment that will promote the HIV and AIDS research in Nigeria, including the HIV vaccine research

Presentations I: Overview of new HIV prevention technologies: A presentation was made highlighting advances in HIV prevention and treatment arena, and the limited HIV prevention options. The current armamentarium for HIV prevention are human behavior- dependent: ability to negotiate safe sex with partners and requiring drug use compliance. Also we cannot rely on treatment alone to curb the epidemic. These necessitate the need to develop an effective HIV vaccine. Some of the ongoing global efforts at vaccine development was discussed including development of the anti-body mediated prevention (AMP) - using an antibody made in the laboratory as intravenous infusion to prevent HIV infections. The study is being conducted among transgender in North and South America and also among sexually active women in sub-Saharan Africa (South and East Africa). Concern was raised on poor investment in HIV vaccine and biomedical HIV prevention research in Nigeria including the fear that an effective vaccine developed may be least effective for the HIV strain in Nigeria with implications for Nigeria to be left behind in the HIV vaccine research and development efforts.

Presentations II: The vaccine research: what next can journalists: The session was facilitated by Bunmi Yekini on behalf of Yinka Shokunbi. The session discussed the importance of vaccine in reducing human and animal disease burdens. Vaccines are one of the most cost-effective interventions public health interventions. Adhering to ethical guidelines and research protocols is very critical in vaccine development. Similarly, ethical reporting on research conduct is very important for journalists to ensure the public are not misinformed. Feedback was shared about the journalists training on translation of the

Evidence for Contraceptive Options and HIV Outcomes (ECHO-Study/Trials) result to the public to inform policy and practice.

Discussions: There were extensive discussions and group activities to identify the core areas of actions for HIV vaccine research in Nigeria that aligns with the objectives of the National HIV and AIDS Research Agenda. The schema below represents the identified areas for action to actualize the National HIV and AIDS Research Agenda with respect to HIV Vaccine development in Nigeria

Civil Society and Journalists Call to Action: Delivering the National HIV and AIDS Research Priority Agenda for HIV Vaccine in Nigeria

<p>Advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilization of advocacy organisations to demand for policy formulations that prioritises HIV vaccine research and development for Nigeria • Work with government institution to continue HIV vaccine research prioritization irrespective of change in government
<p>Public awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create public awareness on the need for HIV vaccine research and development • Promote conduct of social and epidemiological research that supports HIV vaccine research and development in Nigeria
<p>Capacity building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train basic science researchers in collaboration with international and regional research institutions to address the HIV vaccine needs for the prevalence HIV strains in Nigeria • Organize exchange postdoctoral fellowship programs to South Africa, Uganda for researchers in Nigeria interested in pursuing a career in HIV vaccine research especially with IHVN and Innovative Biotech
<p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with private sector to invest long term in a HIV vaccine research agenda for Nigeria • Explore use of tax rebates to develop HIV vaccine research infrastructure • Prioritise budgetary allocation for HIV vaccine research in institutional research allocation
<p>Create enabling environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in the development of research laboratories that can support HIV vaccine research • Improve the power sector to ensure stable electricity supplies • Make research interesting and easily accessible to laypersons

Next step: NHVMAS will engage with the larger civil society organization working on HIV and AIDS in Nigeria to review the report of this roundtable, have extensive discussions on the identify issues and develop a CSO position paper on their critical priority for HIV Vaccine Development in Nigeria. This effort is part of the process of ensuring the community voice shape the national HIV research agenda.