



Kenya Medical Association

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

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KMA STATEMENT ON THE RESURGENCE OF COVID-19 INFECTIONS AND INCREASED FATALITY RATE

The Kenya Medical Association is a professional association bringing together registered medical practitioners and dentists in Kenya, with the twin mission of championing for the welfare of doctors and advocating for quality health care for all.

Pursuant to the KMA mission, we are mandated to engage the national and county governments and any other individual or organization that may be useful in improving the welfare of doctors and the quality of health care in this country.

Since the reopening of the economy in August 2020 Kenya has witnessed a steady increase in COVID-19 cases and fatalities and positivity rate. To date 56,000 confirmed cases have been reported with 1000 Kenyans succumbing to the disease.

A sharp rise of COVID-19 cases has been noted in the counties with a notable spike in infections in the Western region. There is a notable increase in patients presenting with more severe clinical symptoms with a significant increase in the proportion of patients requiring oxygen support and critical care. In the last week, Kenya recorded its highest fatality rate with almost 100 deaths.

The Association notes with concern that adherence to the Ministry of Health guidelines meant to curb the spread of the coronavirus is waning. This has been attributed to pandemic fatigue, financial constraints faced by Kenyans during movement restrictions and concerns about the government's approach and communication strategy. Of more concern is the fact that political leaders who should be leading by example have blatantly defied the Ministry of Health's guidelines on COVID-19. An increase in cases in several counties has been linked to political rallies, which have proven to be

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super-spreader events. The gains made to mitigate the effects of this pandemic are quickly being reversed during these high-contact gatherings.

Whereas the government has put in COVID-19 response measures, there have been reports of corruption scandals and claims of misuse of funds that should be investigated. All the while, health workers have received inadequate personal protective equipment and little to no training on COVID-19 case management. The testing capacity for COVID-19 across the country has been low and may have contributed to the sustained community spread and late diagnosis. The factors enumerated have led to a higher exposure of health workers to COVID-19 and indeed an increased number of health workers have been isolated and quarantined as a result of exposure to COVID-19. This has then resulted in disruption of service delivery in health facilities across the countries. Last week, we lost a dear colleague, Dr. Daniel Alushula, a senior orthopedic surgeon in Kakamega. He has been instrumental in the provision of surgical services in Western Kenya. 1500 other healthcare workers are infected, and many are fighting for their lives in hospitals across the country. The Association notes that the counties have not fulfilled the HRH recommendations by the Ministry of Health on the ratio of health workers to patient and will soon be unable to handle the health burden occasioned by the Pandemic and the other medical needs.

With reduced numbers of healthcare professionals on the frontline, there is an increase in the workload and a high incidence of burnout, mental and physical exhaustion. The COVID-19 health workers compensation package approved by cabinet has not been effected to date. Many frontline workers do not have a proper medical cover despite their daily commitment to save the lives of Kenyans. The incentive to care for patients is slowly dwindling as health workers explore other opportunities. The time to act to improve health worker conditions and curb community transmission is now. Any delay will result in more expensive interventions in future and longer time to build back better.

To improve health worker safety, the Kenya Medical Association urges the government to institute the following measures:

- 1) Hire more health workers to ensure every Kenyan has access to the highest attainable standard of healthcare, as envisioned in the constitution
- 2) Provide adequate and quality personal protective equipment to all health workers
- 3) Implement the compensation plan for health workers and pay salaries on time

- 4) Equip COVID-19 isolation facilities to respond to the surge in infections
- 5) Coordinate testing contact tracing and surveillance of COVID-19 infections.
- 6) Fast track the formation of a constitutional Health service commission to sort the perennial health workers issues and ensure quality health services.

To curb the community spread of COVID-19, we recommend the following as “**circuit breakers**” to stop the cycle of transmission:

1. That the government bans all large gatherings including political rallies for a period of no less than 30 days
2. That the government enforces adherence to Ministry of Health guidelines for bars, restaurants and clubs especially for those operating in total disregard of the guidelines
3. That the government reinstitutes strict restrictions on movement within counties that are experiencing a spike in infections
4. That the government enforces strict compliance to public health measures including physical distancing, hand washing, mandatory wearing of masks and testing in keeping with the **Swiss –cheese** approach of curbing the infections.
5. That the county governments improve access to COVID-19 testing and equip health facilities to accommodate and care for COVID-19 patients, particularly those in need of critical care
6. That the government ensures strict adherence to COVID-19 preventive measures in our schools through linking them to healthcare service.

Signed,



Dr. Were Onyino.

President KMA