



Kenya Medical Association

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

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KMA PRESS BRIEFING ON COVID19

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. CRAC had its nineteenth meeting on Wednesday 23rd September 2020 and found it important to address the nation from the medical side of things.

A few of the issues addressed are as follows:

1. ON COVID-19 TESTING AND HEALTH SYSTEM PREPAREDNESS

The COVID -19 testing level is still relatively low. We are thus unable to get the full picture of pandemic. Despite several advisories on COVID-19 testing, there is no indication on improvement on testing level. In the long run strengthening of the health system through provision of adequate commodities and hiring of adequate numbers of health workers would serve to mitigate the relatively low testing capacity.

2 HEALTH WORKERS PROTECTION

The occupational Health and safety levels in the country are still variable with health workers in some counties still not having access to adequate quality PPE for their use during work. KMA continues to call for prioritization of the safety of the health workers through provision of adequate PPE, training, and psychosocial support.

The Association commends the President and Cabinet for approving the compensation and welfare package for health workers and calls for fast tracking of its implementation.

3 ON RELAXATION OF COVID-19 MITIGATION MEASURES

COVID-19 mitigation measures have been prescribed by the government via the ministry of health guidelines. The oft repeated measures of hand hygiene with soap and water, wearing masks, observing social distance and avoiding crowded public places and unnecessary travel remain the cornerstone of COVID19 mitigation. Several recent political gatherings held in disregard of COVID-19 prevention measures sends the wrong messages to the public who will follow suit and relax their observance of COVID19 measures. There is absolutely no benefit of risking a preventable spike in number of COVID19 infections at the altar of politicking. Any spike in COVID19 cases will affect the health workers disproportionately more than any other group of Kenyans. With the medics on the lead the country has done well in COVID19 mitigation. Politicians should not reverse this gain.

The Ministry of Health should enhance risk communication to the public,

4. ON SCHOOL OPENING

The reason educational institutions were closed was to reduce physical interaction and thus lower the risk of transmission of community COVID-19 in Kenya. There are indications that schools may open in the late October 2020.

To justify reopening these institutions there must be:

- Evidence that the epidemiological pattern of the pandemic is well known

- The risk of community transmission is eliminated or significantly reduced
- The country is prepared to handle any potential surge in transmission that might result from reopening, and that measures have been taken to ensure that the school environment is safe and healthy.

The Association had recommended designation of **COVID-19 isolation and treatment facilities** to cover all counties. An attempt was made to do this following the presidential directive on the same. This was relatively successful.

An attempt was made to recruit additional human resources for health to address the shortfall and prepare for the possibility of a surge in transmission when movement restrictions are lifted. Human resources for health management has proved to be the most difficult aspect of the pandemic. Establish a centralized mechanism for managing human resources for health in order to ensure that in future decisions such as those we propose in the short term can be made by a competent authority that has the necessary information to do so. This would be achieved through the establishment of a **Health Service Commission**.

KMA in association with other healthcare associations are facilitating these training for health workers on management of this pandemic. Other partners are also doing their part.

- Regulations that allow for home-based quarantine and isolation have been put in place.
- **There is still a challenge in securing the supply chain** to ensure adequate **Personal Protective Equipment** and other supplies for our health facilities. A good attempt has been made on this though.
- There has been an attempt to fully reopen our hospitals and health facilities to deal with other health conditions that are prevalent in the country
- **Plans to reopen health training institutions with the appropriate protections to support the health system at this time of great need** are at advanced levels, with some institutions continuing part of their academic programs online. The institutions need to move with speed to open.
- Educational institutions will need to ensure that they have **access to health services**, including where possible, health workers designated to take care of the learners should they fall ill. This ties in with the need to ensure that there are enough health workers in the learning institutions to facilitate assessment of the school population.
- The association hopes that learning institutions will ensure that they have access to **sanitary facilities** and have regulations in place to ensure health risks to learners are minimized. Consideration must be put in place for the care for students and teachers with comorbidities
- Measures must be made for **mental health and wellness** with students and teachers going into a new environment.
- The Association recommends that a **clear plan be put in place should outbreaks in schools and learning institutions occur**.

As we plunge into an uncertain future in which we have to live with not only COVID19 but also past, current and future health challenges, KMA urges the government to remain focused on providing **Universal Health Coverage** to all Kenyans via **'Build Back Better'** mantra of WHO where the health systems must be left better after COVID19 by positive investment in all pillars of healthcare and especially the health workforce.

Signed,



Dr. Were Onyino
President.