



Kenya Medical Association

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

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KMA STATEMENT ON THE COVID -19 PANDEMIC SITUATION IN KENYA

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

A. CURRENT COVID -19 SITUATION IN KENYA

COVID 19 situation in Kenya has evolved since the first case reported a year ago. So far, we have over 120,000 cases and 2000 deaths. We are currently in the 3rd wave of the disease and as with previous waves seen in June-July and October-November 2020, the increase in cases has in a short period of time stretched thin the resources and stockpiles that had been set aside to manage COVID-19. Majority of the hospitals with **ICUs and COVID19 isolation beds with oxygen** are reported to have a waiting list for patients needing these services. This results in lack of access to care.

B. COVID-19 DIAGNOSIS AND TESTING

COVID-19 testing levels in the country have not been adequate with limited testing capacity in counties. There are reports of counties waiting over 5 days to get patients results and thus interfering with patient care and prevention of further exposure. It is reported that some health institutions and practitioners are not testing some patients due to cost implications to the patients and avoidance of claims rejection by insurance companies. Lack of testing puts contacts of the patient at risk of contracting the illness if isolation is not encouraged.

This will also support regions that have significant time lags between sample collection and receipt of results.

C. ON SUSPECTED NEW COVID-19 VARIANTS

As more and more people get infected, variants of the virus will continue occur. Currently, there are reported variants from Britain, South Africa and Brazil. Studies are ongoing as to whether these variants are more efficient in their transmission or cause more severe disease. Kenya being a travel hub is susceptible to new strains and the Association urges that investment in research be increased to identify any new variants and guide management.

D. COVID-19 VACCINATION

On the 3rd of March 2021, Kenya received approximately 1 million vaccine doses of the Astra Zeneca vaccine, this was after a massive collaborative effort between various agencies including the WHO, UNICEF, Global Vaccine Alliance among others and our government to put together the strategy, financing, procurement, transportation and now in-country distribution of the doses received.

The vaccine is being administered in 2 jabs with the period between the 2 jabs being dependent on vaccine availability, Kenya currently has a lag period of 8 weeks and therefore the 2 jabs will be given 8 weeks apart.

The vaccination exercise will be carried out in three phases:

- Phase 1 – health workers, security agencies (March 2021 – June 2021)
- Phase 2 – Elderly and population with comorbidities (July 2021-June 2022)
- Phase 3 – All other vulnerable populations (2023)

The vaccine has been distributed to all 47 counties and is available in at least every County Referral Hospital for disbursement to the Front-line workers and security agents and teachers.

Vaccine Hesitancy

There is concern over the hesitancy of some health workers to get the vaccine. KMA is sensitizing its members on Covid Vaccination, dispelling myths on the same and encouraging all health workers to get vaccinated.

E. COVID-19 MEASURES

We continue to urge the public to continue to adhere to the prevention measures by washing hands with soap and water or alcohol rub, wearing of face masks and maintaining physical distancing. The Association urges enforcement of public health measures by all, to protect the hospitals and hospital staff from an overwhelming number of sick patients that they find themselves too stretched to handle.

The school holiday is indeed a welcome reprieve as it will minimize transmission that had increased during the schooling calendar.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. COVID-19 testing capacity should be increased and availed for FREE. We also urge for an enhanced range of testing by availing **antigen tests** to be used for screening at hospitals that are as yet unable to conduct PCR testing.
2. **Rapid Vaccination Approach** - All eligible Kenyans receive the vaccine as soon as they are available. This will protect from severe disease and reduce infection and transmission to reduce the pressure on our health system to allow those with severe and/or critical illnesses to access care.
3. **Risk communication and Vaccine side effects / adverse reactions** - The Association urges the Ministry of Health and local media agencies to take proactive steps to reduce hesitancy to the vaccine by providing factual information about the vaccine and engaging the Association and other medical professionals in educating the public.
4. **Vaccine Advocacy**- The Government of Kenya to continue lobbying to have COVID-19 vaccines made available globally and locally. Increasing the population vaccinated will assist towards opening up the economy via gradual easing of restrictions.
5. **Health workers training** -The Ministry of Health to continue and scale up the training and sensitization of healthcare workers on the COVID-19 vaccine to ensure an effective rollout and uptake of the same.

Signed,



Dr. Were Onyino
President.