

# **ACPN- Bridging The Gaps In SUDs And Shortfalls In M-H Workforce Through Mass Training Of Members**

*Written by;*

**Pharm Babatunde Samuel Aremu MAW.**

Desk Officer,

Mental Health Special Interest Group

of the Association of Community,

Pharmacists of Nigeria(ACPN).

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The statistics continue to be damning! The 2020 report of EpiAfrica on the mental health situation in Nigeria puts sufferers of mental health disorders at between 20% and 30% (40m to 60m) of her entire population of 200 million. This is huge especially considering the abysmally low number of available mental health professionals (Psychiatrists 1: 800,000; Mental health nurses 1: 25,000; Psychologists 1:1.33m) as well as the grossly inadequate number of mental health hospitals in the country which was put at 10.

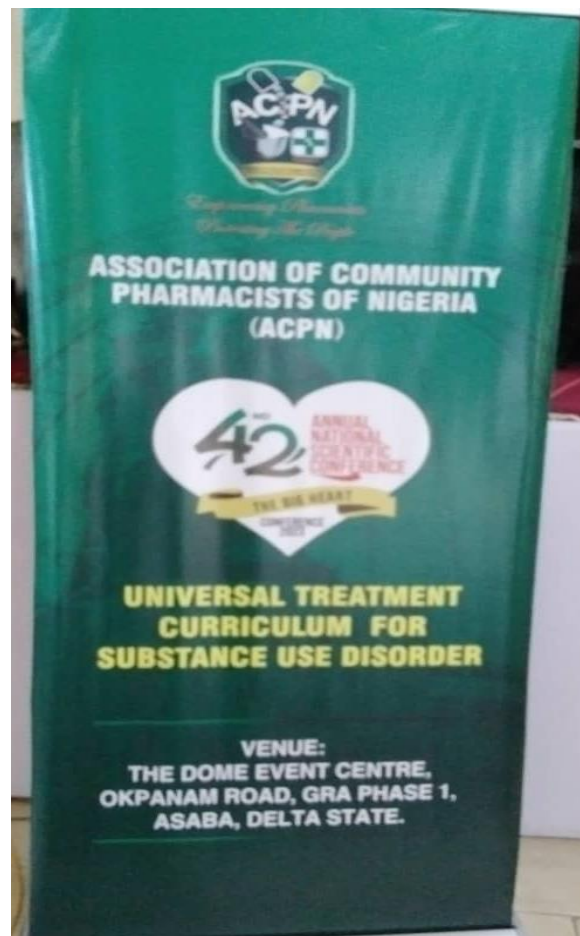
Furthermore, a report in 2022 by the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime UNODC in Nigeria indicates that 14.4% (14.3 million) of people aged between 15 and 64 years among this population abuse drugs. Some things must change if we truly love these people hooked on drugs!

Community Pharmacists, being the first point of call for most healthcare seekers as well as being highly trusted by members of their communities and by virtue of the pronouncement of Community Pharmacies by the Federal government as Primary Healthcare Centres, have been identified as pivotal healthcare professionals to fittedly stand in these gaps.

Hitherto, the level of interest and participation by Community Pharmacists in the mental health space and SUDs interventions have been low. However, with the incoming of a new Executive of Association of Community Pharmacists of Nigeria under the able leadership of Pharm Adewale Aderemi Oladigbolu FPSN, this seeming apathy was about to take a turn around.

Between July 31st and August 4th 2023, during the Association's Annual National Scientific Conference in Asaba, Delta State and buoyed by the burning passion to increase the capacities of Community Pharmacists in the aspects of Substance Use Disorders, the leadership of ACPN got 95 of her members trained. These 95 distinguished Community Pharmacists were drawn from 25 out of the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory of the country.

The 95 were trained on SUDs using the Basic Level Series of the Universal Treatment Curriculum as freely made available by the Colombo Plan Secretariat and the USA Department of State. Courses 1( Physiology and Pharmacology for Addiction Professionals) and 2 (Treatment for SUDs- The Continuum of Care for Addiction Professionals) were covered and completed during this period. The trainings were conducted by UTC Certified Personnels. This training costs the Association over #1.2m in terms of subsidy which was used to handle the Facilitators hotel bills for 5 days and their flight tickets among other expenses.



Our belief is that when trained, Community Pharmacists in Nigeria can work very well with other healthcare workers in the mental health arena within and outside the country to significantly reduce the prevalence of this subset of mental health challenges ravaging the citizenry and also improve quality of lives through prevention and treatment interventions.



## **INTRODUCTION**

The journey to this training commenced on 21st January, 2022 when the National Chairman of the Association Pharm Adewale Aderemi Oladigbolu FPSN initiated the formation of a Mental Health Special Interest Group within the fold of ACPN. The essence was to raise up a good number of Community Pharmacists among the over 8000 available practitioners who would pursue careers in both free and fees-based MH courses available locally and internationally. It was also aimed at developing enough potentials in this direction and for interested members to acquire necessary skills and credentials good enough to stand them out as professionals within the MH global space while still carrying out their core Community Pharmacy practices.

To this end, 2 WhatsApp groups comprising highly elated and motivated members totaling 450 were formed. These groups are still up and running. These platforms and a few others were used to advertised this training for over 45 days through a Google form and very colourful e-flyers. 135 Community Pharmacists filled and submitted the form. This showed their deep-seated interest in this training. However, 40 of these colleagues could not make it to

the training venue on account of several factors bothering on the cost of training (despite the subsidy) , distance of venue from their states, clash of training with 2 other simultaneously held trainings at same conference, last minute exigencies which altered plans of participation etc.

To get this impressive number of 95, the Association leverage on few factors such as conducting the training during our Annual National conference where at least a thousand Community Pharmacists would gather; making the training also attract Pharmacists Council of Nigeria's Mandatory Continuous Professional Development Points and by reducing the cost of training by over 50% of conventional rates.



*The Dome Event Centre, venue of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Scientific conference of ACPN was first used to assemble registered participants on arrival before moving to Troscana Hotel for subsequent training sessions.*

## **TRAINING GOALS**

Our immediate training goal was to have at least 100 Community Pharmacists introduced to the Basic Level Series of the UTC by starting and completing UTC 1&2. This was achieved because before this training, the Association had earlier facilitated the training of a few colleagues on UTC 1&2 by way of subsidy.

This trainings have helped our members gained understanding of:

- the Physiology of addiction as a brain disease
- the Pharmacology of Psychoactive substances
- the comprehensive overview of the nature of change
- the process and elements of treatments for SUDs.

These goals were met going by the results of both the pre-test and post-test conducted in which all participants scored far higher marks in their post tests compared to marks they obtained before the commencement of training.

Our ultimate goal for Community Pharmacists in Nigeria is to have over 1500 complete the Basic Level series comprising 8 courses within 2 years.



## **METHODOLOGY ADOPTED DURING TRAINING**

The venue was the main event hall of Villa Toscana Hotel, Asaba. The venue was well lighted, well ventilated with functional Air-conditioning gadgets and also with accessible and neatly maintained rest rooms.

The training ran on both morning and evening sessions each day for 5 days with each of the 2 trainers anchoring different sessions.

The UTC 1 and 2 curriculum were made into ebooks and posted to the group's WhatsApp page for easy access and downloads.

Hard copies of both UTC 1 and 2 were also made available and virtually all participants had copies

Occasionally, class broke into smaller groups for practical purposes with leadership of each group rotated among group members

The use of dozens of Flip charts, sticky notes, Markers, paper tapes etc aided discussions, presentations and practical sessions throughout training.



## OUR TRAINERS

### **Dr. Olajumoke Koyejo**

Consultant Addiction Psychiatrist  
Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital,  
Yaba, Lagos  
Nigeria



**Mrs Morenikeji Olaniyi Agboola,**  
Asst Director of Nursing Services,  
Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital,  
Yaba, Lagos.  
Nigeria.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

The Association is already looking ahead for the next round of trainings.

The success recorded in the just reported training as well as calls from majority of UTC 1&2 trained personnel are enough motivation to move on with both UTC 3&4 and also a repetition of UTC 1&2 for colleagues who missed the first set of training and those who are now seeing the need for the exercise.

To this end, mid October this year had been earmarked for this round of trainings.

The Association is also looking at having similar trainings in future Conferences.

## MORE PICTURES FROM THE TRAINING

