

PRESS RELEASE ON THE NINE NEW CONFIRMED CASES OF COVID -19 IN BAYELSA STATE

June 1, 2020

Distinguished Gentlemen,

Yesterday, the NCDC in its usual manner announced 307 new confirmed COVID -19 cases. Nine of these cases were samples from Bayelsa. These results are coming from a backlog of 62 samples sent to the UPTH COVID -19 laboratory last week.

These nine newly confirmed cases bring the total number of confirmed cases in the State to 21.

Six of out of these nine cases are contacts of previously confirmed cases while three are not epidemiologically linked to any of the previous confirmed cases. Two of these fresh unlinked cases are critically ill and were on admission in our public Hospitals for other underlying illnesses (one had undergone sessions of dialysis) even before samples were collected for COVID -19 testing at the instances of the consulting teams in collaboration with the State COVID -19 Rapid Response Team. The third unlinked case is a Health Care Professional.

All nine new cases have since been evacuated for further treatment at our Isolation facilities.

All their contacts are being line listed and adequately followed up including necessary environmental decontamination. Samples have and are still being collected from their high -risk contacts while they have all been counselled on self-quarantine. Risk communication and community engagement are ongoing.

We discharged three cases during the past week. One case was discharged on Saturday, and the two other cases (including the doctor) were discharged just yesterday after all their repeat tests returned negative and patients' clinical statuses had met other criteria for discharge. This makes a total of nine cases that have been discharged from our Isolation facilities.

Currently, we have eleven active cases of COVID -19 in the State. All cases except the two cases who were previously on admission for other underlying illness are in stable clinical conditions.

Unfortunately, we recorded a death last week. The patient who was initially responding to treatment suddenly developed severe shortness of breath. All attempts to salvage him proved abortive even with the intensive and delicate procedures that were administered by the attending medical personnel. He has since been buried by the Bayelsa State COVID -19 Safe Burial team and witnessed by relatives, friends, and colleagues.

The State Government Quarantine Facility has since being admitting contacts who are unable to self-quarantine. They have been very cooperative while enjoying the luxury provided at this centre.

The State Public Emergency Operations Centre (the COVID -19 Situation Room/ War Room of the State response) and the State COVID -19 Task Force are and will remain on REPOSE mode; doing their best to contain and mitigate the impact of this pandemic.

We now use the UPTH Port Harcourt Reference COVID -19 Laboratory. In the past weeks, we have been sending an average of 25 samples daily to this facility. Most of these samples are contacts of confirmed cases. Little wonder our positive figures seem to be on the increase. This is because of our robust surveillance activities and improved testing rates.

Permit me to seize this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to all the health care workers particularly the frontlines who have been tireless in their resolve and commitment to the COVID -19 response in the State.

There is need to re-emphasize that public vigilance is important while asking that patients should confide in their physicians the true case history of their ill health. We have also commenced active health facility case search for any case of Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) in our hospitals to have a sentinel insight into the importation and possible community transmission of COVID -19.

Let me reiterate that we still believe in the opportunities and the gains of prevention and early detection while building our capacity to manage COVID-19 seamlessly.

To this end we join the rest of the global community to advise as follows:

1. Regular and thorough hand washing with soap and water; the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer is also recommended.
2. Social distancing is key. Maintain at least 2 meters (6 feet) distance between you and anyone. Avoid crowds and follow the stay-at-home advisory.
3. Endeavour to practice good respiratory hygiene: when sneezing or coughing, cover your mouth and nose with your sleeve at the flexed elbow or with a tissue. Then dispose-off the used tissue safely, immediately.
4. Exposed persons should stay home if you feel unwell with symptoms like fever, cough, and difficulty in breathing and notify relevant authorities immediately.
5. DO NOT SPREAD FAKE NEWS. Citizens are advised not to abuse social media and indulge in spreading misinformation that can cause panic and lead to a stampede

All health facilities should ensure strict and appropriate IPC at all triage points. The Bayelsa State Public Health Emergency Operations centre will continue to provide updates and guidance while implementing all necessary measures to ensure public health and safety.

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