

JOINT HEALTH SECTOR UNIONS & PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS



PRESS RELEASE

9TH JULY 2020

Ghana Medical Association (GMA)

Ghana Registered Nurses and Midwives Association (GRNMA)

Health Services Workers' Union of TUC Ghana (HSWU)

Government and Hospital Pharmacists Association (GHOSPA)

Following an emergency meeting held on 1st of July 2020, by the Ghana Medical Association, Ghana Registered Nurses and Midwives Association, Health Services Workers Union and Government and Hospital Pharmacists Association to discuss the spike in the spread of COVID-19 infection among health workers in Ghana, and considering that the increasing numbers had a grave tendency of stifling the efforts to curtail the spread of the coronavirus in Ghana, we are having this Press Conference to inform the general public and our dear health care workers of the following:

1. COVID-19 INFECTIONS AMONG HEALTH WORKERS

As at 30th June 2020, over **seven hundred and seventy-nine (779)** health workers had contracted the COVID-19 virus in the line of duty with a total of **nine (9)** deaths having occurred so far. A large number of health workers are also currently in isolation awaiting their test results after having been exposed to the virus at their places of work.

The data gathered so far indicates that;

190 members of the GMA (Doctors) have contracted the virus with 4 unfortunate deaths.

410 members of the GRNMA and its Allied Associations (Nurses and Midwives) have contracted the virus with 1 unfortunate death.

156 members of the HSWU have contracted the virus with 3 unfortunate deaths.

23 members of the GHOSPA have contracted the virus with 1 unfortunate death.

The major causes of this unacceptably high rate of infections among health workers could be attributed to the following:

- i. Inadequate and erratic supply of PPEs to health workers both in quantity and quality (appropriateness)
- ii. General breakdown or non-adherence to infection prevention and control (safety) protocols in most facilities together with shortages or complete lack of disinfecting agents in some facilities
- iii. Non-disclosure or concealment of information from health workers by facility managers when colleagues test positive for COVID-19 at the work place
- iv. The delays in receipt of COVID-19 test results for patients being managed on wards resulting in increased exposure of health personnel to the virus
- v. The break down or inadequate contact tracing within facilities
- vi. Lack of designated holding bays for suspected cases in some facilities
- vii. Delays in the closure of wards or facilities for disinfection following exposure to COVID-19 patients
- viii. Apparent disregard of the safety protocols by some health workers and patients who visit health facilities

The rising infection rate among health workers is a matter of grave concern because it negatively affects staffing levels and results in mounting work pressure on the few health workers at post. If this trend persists, there would virtually be just a few health workers available to attend to patients even as COVID-19 cases in Ghana keeps rising.

2. OUR DEPARTED COLLEAGUES (HEROES)

The leadership of the Health Sector Unions and Professional Associations hereby express our condolences to the bereaved families of our fallen Comrades and Heroes. We also urge the general public to join us in prayer in committing the souls of our departed colleagues into the hands of the Lord.

3. CHALLENGES IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC NATIONAL RESPONSE AND CASE MANAGEMENT

The Health Sector Unions and Professional Associations are gravely concerned about the increasing COVID-19 case count in the country, especially the daily case count. Increasingly,

a lot more symptomatic and very ill patients who require in-patient care are presenting to our health facilities. The current state of affairs has the potential to over-stretch the already fragile health system as well as impact negatively on the care of non-COVID-19 patients.

The national COVID-19 response is also fraught with a lot of challenges including:

- Shortage or inadequate Personal Protective Equipment's (PPE's) for health workers in particular
- Periodic shortages or non-availability of essential drugs for case management
- Reduced testing capacity in the mist of increasing daily case count as well as huge delays in getting test results for patients (sometimes up to three (3) weeks or more). This situation is not the best, especially with its attendant high risk of viral exposure to both health professionals and the general public at the various health facilities
- Inadequate human resource for specialist care
- Inadequate intensive care units (high dependency units) or a complete lack of same in a lot of regions in the country

4. RECOMMENDATION

By this Press Statement, we entreat the government to take swift and practicable measures to avert the imminent calamitous ramifications. To curtail the spread and win the fight against COVID-19, the group proffers the following measures;

Government should as a matter of urgency ensure the following to help curtail the spread of COVID-19 in the country

- i. Regular provision of adequate PPEs for all health workers at all times
- ii. Intensification of COVID-19 preventive and stigma education among the general public
- iii. Government through the Security agencies should ensure Strict enforcement of all COVID-19 safety protocols without fear or favour
- iv. Transparent and adequate dissemination of information to exposed health workers whose colleagues have tested positive for COVID-at the work place.
- v. Expand COVID-19 testing centers and their capacity throughout the country together with readily available test kits to prevent undue delays in obtaining test results. Government must ensure that test results are available within 24 to 48hours
- vi. All health facilities must mandatorily create holding bays to detain all patients who are suspected to have contracted COVID-19.
- vii. Functional Infection, Prevention and Control (Safety) Committees in all health facilities

We wish to state with much trepidation that, Ghana would be treading on dangerous grounds if the government fails to act accordingly

5. MOTIVATIONAL PACKAGE FOR HEALTH WORKERS – DEFINITION OF FRONTLINE HEALTH WORKER

It is also important to state that all health facilities are highly infectious zones and for that matter anybody working there is in danger. In view of this, we call on the government to consider redefining the term “Frontline Health Workers”. The reason is that information reaching the Unions indicates that majority of the health workers contracting COVID-19 are rather those who are not classified as “Frontline Health Workers”. Considering this trend, it is fair that all health workers are considered for the motivational package.

6. GENERAL PUBLIC

The general public is also entreated to adhere to all the safety protocols to curtail the spread of the Disease. **COVID-19 IS REAL**. There is no available vaccine for COVID-19, the only way to prevent its spread is through strict adherence to the safety protocols at all times. Stigmatization should also be avoided in all its forms to allow people to present themselves for early treatment and to allow for effective integration into their communities after treatment.

Let’s keep to the safety protocols and stay safe!

Long Live All Health Sector Unions and Association !

Long Live Trade Union Solidarity !

Long Live Ghana !



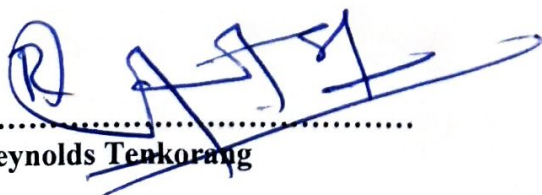
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Dr. Frank Ankobea

**President
GMA**



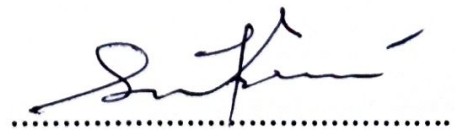
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Mrs. Perpetual Ofori-Ampofo

**President
GRNMA**



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Mr. Reynolds Tenkorang

**General Secretary
HSWU**



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Pharm. Nathan Coompson

**Chairman
GHOSPA**