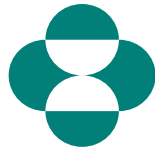




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AFRICA HEALTH BUSINESS

HPV EDUCATION EVENT REPORT

Sustainable financing for cervical cancer prevention in Nigeria



Tuesday, 26th September 2023



6:00 - 8:00 PM (GMT)



Speakers

Public healthcare coverage



Dr. Adetiloye Oniyire
Country Director
Jhpiego

The health economics
of HPV screening



Ms. Aadila Fakier
Public Affairs and Market
Access Manager Africa
BD

The role and potential of
private health insurance



Mr. Abdulkadri Osumah
Ag. MD/CEO
HCI Healthcare Ltd

Innovative financing
mechanisms



Ms. Vuyo Mjekula
Director: External Affairs
(Policy & Market Access)
MSD

The role of civil society
organizations



Dr. Adamu Alhassan Umar
President/CEO
Nigerian Cancer Society

Moderator



Dr. Francis Ohanyido
Director General
West African Institute of Public
Health (WAIPH), Nigeria

Background

Becton Dickinson and Company (BD), Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD), and Africa Health Business (AHB) organized an exclusive HPV Education Event in Abuja, Nigeria. The event focused on Sustainable financing for cervical cancer prevention in Nigeria, with emphasis on Nigeria's progress and status in the journey towards eliminating cervical cancer through primary prevention, including HPV vaccination and screening.

The main objective of this session was to facilitate the co-creation of solutions and establish pathways for collaboration aimed at sustainable improvements in both vaccination and early-stage screening efforts. BD, MSD, and AHB have partnered with a shared commitment to advance the cervical cancer agenda in Nigeria.

The key discussion areas during the session included:

- Public healthcare coverage
- The health economics of HPV screening
- Innovative financing mechanisms for cervical cancer
- Role of private insurance in cervical cancer prevention
- Role of civil society in cervical cancer prevention



About Becton, Dickinson, and Company (BD):

BD is a global medical technology company that is advancing the world of health by improving medical discovery, diagnostics, and the delivery of care. The company provides innovative solutions that help advance medical research and genomics, enhance the diagnosis of infectious disease and cancer, improve medication management, promote infection prevention, equip surgical and interventional procedures, and support the management of diabetes.

For more information see: www.bd.com



About MSD:

MSD has been inventing for live, bringing forward medicines and vaccines for many of the world's most challenging diseases in pursuit of their mission to save and improve lives. MSD continues to be at the forefront of research to prevent and treat disease that threaten people and animals – including cancer, infectious diseases, and emerging animal diseases.

For more information see: www.msd.co.za



About Africa Health Business (AHB):

AHB is a Pan-African advisory and consulting firm aiming to increase equitable access to healthcare in Africa. With a focus on the African continent and via private sector engagement, AHB offers market access and implementation support, serve as a health ecosystem enabler and provide stakeholder engagement services.

For more information see: www.africahb.com

Executive Summary

Globally, cervical cancer is the third most common cancer to affect women. About 90% of the newly diagnosed cases are found in low-and middle-income countries¹. In Nigeria, cervical cancer ranks as the 2nd most frequent cancer among women and the 2nd most frequent cancer death among women between 15 and 44 years of age. The HPV types 16, 18, 31, 35, 51, 52 are all high risk and are prevalent serotypes in Nigeria with serotypes 16 and 18 responsible for 66.9% of Nigeria's cervical cancer prevalence.²

This indicates that both the prevention and screening activities in the country are low. Some reasons for this are: Ignorance about cervical cancer prevention and screening practices, cultural and religious beliefs as well as the underdeveloped health infrastructure and competing health interests in terms of financing.

The human papillomavirus (HPV) is the main contributor (95%) leading to cervical cancer. Although most infections clear up on their own, a risk remains that the HPV infection becomes chronic and can eventually lead to invasive cervical cancer.

To prevent or cure cervical cancer there are three types of prevention strategies:

1. Primary prevention: Vaccination against HPV
2. Secondary prevention: Screening and treatment of pre-cancerous lesions
3. Tertiary prevention: Diagnosis and treatment of invasive cervical cancer.

Nigeria has a population of 60.9 million women ages 15 years and older who are at risk of developing cervical cancer. Current estimates indicate that every year 12,075 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer and 7,968 die from the disease². Therefore, prevention and early-stage screening of HPV is key.

Public healthcare coverage

The fight against cervical cancer in Nigeria is a complex challenge that demands a multifaceted approach for success. To effectively combat the disease, several critical success factors must be considered and integrated into public healthcare strategies.

First, **improving vaccination programs** while targeting the right age group, including both boys and girls and women, is essential. A robust vaccination

¹ Source: WHO, Factsheet Cervical cancer: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cervical-cancer>

² Source: WHO: <https://www.afro.who.int/countries/nigeria/news/cervical-cancer-early-detection-saves-lives>

program can serve as a primary preventive measure against cervical cancer, reducing its incidence significantly. Screening and early detection for HPV infection are equally important. Detecting precancerous phases early on can offer individuals a much better chance of successful treatment and improved health outcomes.

Education and awareness creation play a pivotal role in changing societal norms and attitudes toward cervical cancer. Many individuals in Nigeria, particularly in rural areas, remain unaware of the existence of this disease. Community-level empowerment and education campaigns are necessary in ensuring that people are well-informed about cervical cancer and know what steps to take for prevention and early detection. Community engagement and mobilization are necessary to ensure widespread sensitization and acceptance of preventive measures. Both local and international NGOs can play a vital role in this community-based approach.

Access to healthcare services, especially in rural areas, needs to be improved. Expanding healthcare infrastructure and providing training and capacity building for healthcare providers are essential steps to ensure that quality care is accessible to all at all times and when most needed. In addition, support services are essential to help individuals already suffering from cervical cancer. Stigmatization must be eliminated, and cervical cancer patients should be well integrated into their communities to receive the necessary support.

Policy and legislation play a fundamental role in fighting cervical cancer. Making vaccination mandatory for specified age groups and ensuring equitable access to vaccines are an important steps in this regard. Data collection and monitoring related to cervical cancer must be strengthened and made accurate. This data serves as the foundation for informed decision-making and effective allocation of resources. To achieve this, there needs to be global collaboration between the private sector, government agencies, and the development sector as they are instrumental in pooling resources and expertise for a more effective response to cervical cancer.

Fighting cervical cancer in Nigeria requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses vaccination, education, improved healthcare access, policy support, and global cooperation. Only through the integration of these critical success factors can significant strides in reducing the burden of cervical cancer in the country be made.

An important determinant of public healthcare coverage involves the role of donor implementing partners

A donor implementing partner is an organization that collaborates with existing stakeholders to implement programs or projects in a specific region or community. These partners work collaboratively to ensure that funds and resources are used effectively and efficiently to achieve the desired goals and objectives.

Implementing partners play an important role in advancing the fight against cervical cancer in Nigeria, offering valuable contributions. Their multifaceted involvement includes service delivery, which seamlessly integrates with other existing programs. Leveraging expertise and technical assistance, these partners ensure that cervical cancer prevention and treatment are seamlessly integrated into healthcare initiatives.

Another way of involvement is the development of the capacity of various stakeholders, ranging from healthcare providers to both private and governmental sectors. This empowerment instills a deep understanding of the importance of cervical cancer programs, fostering a collective commitment to support these initiatives. Additionally, widespread advocacy efforts are undertaken to enhance awareness and mobilize support for the cause.

Implementing partners engage in co-designing cervical cancer programs in collaboration with diverse stakeholders, such as communities, healthcare workers, government agencies, and the private sector. Recognizing that the community itself brings valuable insights into the issue and these collaborative efforts become instrumental in addressing the cervical cancer menace.

Furthermore, implementing partners excel in spearheading community engagement initiatives, playing an important role in sensitizing the population about cervical cancer. Their close ties with both communities and healthcare facilities enable them to bridge the gap in understanding and awareness.

Supporting research and innovation is another important role that these partners play. By drawing from lessons learned in various countries and programmatic areas, they contribute to the enhancement of cervical cancer programs. They

produce publications that serve as references and learning points for future endeavors. In recent times, leveraging AI in data collection, triangulation and reporting, has quickened the decision-making processes hence promoting efficiency.

Implementing partners also engage in product research and development, involving the entire cervical cancer prevention continuum, spanning from vaccination to screening and treatment. They work to ensure equitable access to these products, particularly in areas where they are most needed, thereby striving to make a significant difference in the fight against cervical cancer in Nigeria.

The health economics of HPV screening

HPV screening offers distinct advantages when compared to conventional cervical cancer screening methods, primarily due to its heightened sensitivity and accuracy. This increased sensitivity results in the detection of positive cases 2-3 times more effectively than traditional methods, while negative test results are also more reliably accurate. Most importantly, HPV screening enables the detection of pre-cancerous lesions at an earlier stage. This is significant because the cost of treating pre-cancerous lesions is considerably lower than the cost of treating women with invasive cancer.

Furthermore, the superior accuracy of HPV screening allows for longer intervals between screenings. As a result, women do not need to undergo screening as frequently as they would with traditional tests. This not only reduces the financial burden on healthcare systems but also leads to improved health outcomes for women. By identifying cancer risk early, the approach minimizes the chances of women developing advanced disease, thereby preventing productivity losses to society.

Considering these pros, HPV screening proves to be a cost-effective option in the long run. Therefore countries should develop health economic models to assess the potential impact of introducing primary HPV screening into their healthcare systems.

Most HPV tests focus on detecting HPV 16 and 18, responsible for 70% of cervical cancers, along with other high-risk types such as 31, 33, 45, 52, and 59, which account for 20% of cases. In addition to this, extended HPV testing identifies individual high-risk types. Recent studies in Ghana have identified genotypes 31, 45, 58, and 35 as emerging in the

Nigerian population. These studies have shown that, in some cases, genotypes 31 and 35 can be just as concerning as genotype 18 in terms of cancer progression.

Extended genotyping enables the identification of women with various high-risk HPV types, allowing for tailored care based on their specific risk profile. Utilizing health economic models in this context can help manage cervical cancer effectively within the Nigerian population and triage women in a manner that aligns with the country's economic priorities, which ultimately results in long-term economic benefits.

Ongoing research into the prevalent genotypes in Nigeria allows for the development of specific treatment and management strategies specific to these genotypes. This enables a more targeted and effective approach to triage women based on their individual risk profiles, further enhancing the potential for improved health outcomes and cost-effectiveness in the fight against cervical cancer.

Innovative financing mechanisms to scale up HPV vaccination.

Innovative financing mechanisms play an important role in expanding HPV vaccination efforts, offering diverse approaches to ensure broader access and affordability:

One notable mechanism is **pooled procurement by Gavi**, the vaccine alliance. Gavi operates as a collective procurement mechanism, capitalizing on economies of scale to enable the mass volume procurement of vaccines. This approach leads to a reduction in unit prices, making vaccines more cost-effective. Even countries that do not meet Gavi eligibility criteria can benefit from pooled procurement negotiations facilitated through UNICEF. Additionally, for countries that have graduated from Gavi, alternative financing mechanisms, such as World Bank loans with a 0% interest rate tailored to immunization programs, remain accessible. These avenues ensure that every country has the capacity to establish and sustain immunization programs, leaving no reason for any nation to be without one.

Immunization funding through international organizations constitutes another significant financing mechanism. Entities like BMGF, USAID, GIZ, DFID, and the EU play a substantial role in

supporting HPV vaccination initiatives. For instance, BMGF has provided catalytic funding for HPV vaccination in Nigeria through the establishment of the HPV Vaccine Acceleration Program Partners Initiative (HAPPI) Consortium. This consortium consolidates expertise across various facets, including policy, access, introduction, implementation, and evaluation, with the objective of increasing the global uptake of HPV vaccines. The consortium is geared towards enhancing equity, program quality, and the acceleration of HPV vaccination coverage among girls and adolescents. This contribution aligns with Gavi's goal of vaccinating 86 million girls and adolescents by 2025 and the global aim of achieving 90% coverage by 2030. Managing such programs in Nigeria, with its devolved health services across the Federal and State systems, necessitates securing buy-in from these different state-level entities.

The choice between **routine and school-based vaccination** programs is another consideration. While school-based programs are known to be more effective in ensuring comprehensive vaccine coverage, they tend to be more costly in terms of implementation. On the other hand, routinizing the vaccine program presents its own complexities despite having a lower upfront cost. This approach requires substantial investments in advocacy, communication, and social mobilization. Additionally, it demands support for last-mile delivery, particularly for healthcare facilities situated in remote areas.

The government plays an important role in advocating for increased health expenditure, ensuring sustainable domestic funding for vaccination programs. Consistent and persistent advocacy efforts are essential in this regard.

Mobilizing domestic resources is equally important, especially in Nigeria, which has the largest economy in Africa, marked by disparities in wealth. Engaging companies in Nigeria that derive commercial benefits from the healthcare sector in discussions on innovative financing mechanisms is a necessary step. Their participation can significantly contribute to ensuring the availability of funds for scaling up HPV vaccination efforts.

Promoting a culture of health savings to minimize out-of-pocket health expenditure is a holistic approach that complements innovative financing mechanisms. By encouraging individuals to set aside funds for healthcare needs, it can alleviate the financial burden on both individuals and the healthcare system, ultimately benefiting the broader population and the success of HPV vaccination initiatives.

The role of private insurance in the fight against cervical cancer in Nigeria

Private insurance can play a transformative role in the battle against cervical cancer in Nigeria, although several challenges need to be addressed.

- The prevailing culture of seeking medical assistance only when illness is advanced hampers the willingness of health insurance companies to provide coverage for preventive measures.
- Furthermore, the lack of technical expertise in rural health facilities poses a barrier for health insurers to extend their services into these areas, as the benefits of offering mass preventive services are limited.
 - However, there is a positive shift in recent times, with more companies recognizing the importance of integrating preventive aspects into insurance packages. This shift is reshaping the design of health plans to prioritize preventive health measures.

The widespread adoption of health insurance would foster greater inclusivity, as market players gain more bargaining power to negotiate reduced service costs. However, to make these feasible, primary healthcare providers need comprehensive training in preventive health screening. A wide network of healthcare providers offering these services will contribute to lowering the overall cost, making screening more accessible to a broader population. This affordability will, in turn, encourage for-profit health insurance companies to expand their coverage.

To increase inclusion, insurance companies could shift their focus towards age-specific, risk-factor-driven health screening packages rather than purely consumer-driven options. For example, coverage for specific health screenings could be limited to women of a particular age group, allowing for more effective fund management and targeted prevention efforts.

Private insurance has the potential to significantly contribute to the fight against cervical cancer in Nigeria by integrating preventive measures into their offerings, expanding coverage, and fostering partnerships with well-trained healthcare providers. These changes can help bridge gaps in access to cervical cancer screening and prevention, ultimately improving health outcomes for women across the country.

Role of civil society in the fight against cervical cancer in Nigeria

In Nigeria, various challenges hinder access to cervical cancer prevention and treatment, including poverty, lack of awareness, persistent myths, limited healthcare access, and the shortage of specialists. Within this context, civil society organizations play a vital role in addressing these barriers and contributing to the fight against cervical cancer.

First, civil society organizations act as coordinators, bringing together stakeholders involved in the battle against cervical cancer. By facilitating collaboration and synergy among different groups, they work toward a shared objective—eliminating cervical cancer. These organizations also advocate for policy implementation that benefits communities, as seen in the recent passage of the bill at the national assembly mandating the teaching of cervical and breast cancer.

In November 2020, when the World Health Organization (WHO) launched the cervical cancer elimination strategy (90-70-90), civil society organizations globally were called upon to create symbolic events to raise awareness of this goal. In response, approximately 30 civil society organizations in Nigeria, under the umbrella of the Nigerian Cancer Society, commemorated this initiative by lighting monuments in several states e.g., Abuja, Port Harcourt, Kebbi and other states. This event marked the birth of the End Cervical Cancer Nigeria Initiative, a prominent cervical cancer organization in Nigeria, which continues its advocacy work in collaboration with the Nigerian Cancer Society to raise awareness.

In 2021, around 50 civil society organizations united to advocate for the amendment of the cervical cancer control plan. They addressed a letter to the Minister of Health, highlighting the impending expiration of the policy and the substantial gaps that remained unaddressed. Their efforts led to the establishment of a committee tasked with reviewing the cervical cancer control plan.

Civil society organizations also collaborate with government agencies, such as the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIS), to improve access to cancer screening. For instance, the Nigerian Cancer Society is working to help NHIS establish cancer screening centers across the country.

This partnership aims to increase accessibility to screening services, starting with one center in each geopolitical zone.

Additionally, civil society organizations work closely with the National Institute for Cancer Research and Treatment, fostering collaboration and sharing knowledge and resources in the fight against cancer.

At the grassroots level, community-based organizations in rural areas are valuable partners for outreach efforts, bridging the gap between healthcare services and underserved populations. Furthermore, organizations like First Ladies Against Cancer Initiative (FLAC) contribute to generating demand for HPV vaccination, leading to increased vaccination rates.

The Nigerian Cancer Society's involvement in the technical working group of the HPV national rollout ensures that critical information reaches its members for awareness creation. This information dissemination, in turn, reaches the communities where these civil society organizations are active, making a significant impact in the battle against cervical cancer.

Civil society organizations in Nigeria play a multifaceted role in the fight against cervical cancer, acting as advocates, coordinators, collaborators, and facilitators of awareness and action. Their efforts are essential in addressing the complex challenges that hinder progress in cervical cancer prevention and treatment in the country.

Key takeaways

Public healthcare coverage

1. **Vaccination Programs:** Prioritizing vaccination programs targeting the right age group, including both genders, is crucial for primary prevention and a significant reduction in cervical cancer incidence.
2. **Screening and Early Detection:** Early detection of HPV infection through screening is equally important, offering better treatment outcomes by identifying precancerous phases.
3. **Education and Awareness:** Community-level empowerment and education campaigns are pivotal in transforming societal norms and attitudes towards cervical cancer, particularly in rural areas.

Health economics of HPV screening

1. Cost-Effective: HPV screening, with longer intervals between screenings, reduces the financial burden on healthcare systems and minimizes advanced disease, preventing productivity losses.
2. Economic Models: Developing health economic models is essential for assessing the potential impact of introducing primary HPV screening into healthcare systems.
3. Extended Genotyping: Identifying various high-risk HPV types through extended genotyping allows tailored care, aligning with economic priorities and improving health outcomes.

Innovative financing mechanisms for HPV vaccination

1. Pooled Procurement: Mechanisms like pooled procurement by Gavi reduce vaccine costs and ensure availability for all countries, including those not meeting Gavi eligibility criteria.
2. Routine vs. School-Based Programs: Choosing between routine and school-based vaccination programs involves cost-effectiveness considerations and requires advocacy and support for implementation.
3. Mobilizing Domestic Resources: Engaging companies in discussions on innovative financing mechanisms in Nigeria's healthcare sector can secure funds for scaling up HPV vaccination.

Role of private health insurance

1. Private insurance can play a transformative role in fighting cervical cancer in Nigeria by integrating preventive measures, expanding coverage, and partnering with healthcare providers.
2. A positive shift towards integrating preventive aspects into insurance packages is reshaping health plans to prioritize preventive health measures.
3. Insurance companies can consider age-specific, risk-factor-driven health screening packages for more effective fund management and targeted prevention efforts.

Role of civil society organizations

1. Coordinators and advocates: Civil society organizations act as coordinators, bringing stakeholders together, and advocate for policy implementation, influencing recent legislation mandating cervical and breast cancer teaching.
2. Community sensitization: Civil society organizations contribute to community sensitization and awareness, bridging gaps in access to cervical cancer prevention and treatment.
3. Collaboration: Collaboration with government agencies, such as NHIS, aims to improve access to cancer screening through the establishment of screening centers.

Speaker quotes

"Nigeria hosted the Abuja Declaration in 2001 and to date, more than 20 years after, we have not made the recommend annual budget allocated to health expenditure. This needs to change through political commitment, collaboration, and partnerships to achieve sustainable and scalable financing in Nigeria."

Dr. Francis Ohanyido
Director General
West African Institute of Public Health (WAIPH),
Nigeria

"Cervical cancer is one of those cancers that I refer to as hopeful cancers because it's the one that we can actually fight and defeat if we are committed. Cervical cancer gives a hope of survival if the right thing is done at the right time."

Dr. Adetiloye Oniyire
Country Director
Jhpiego

"It is important that the issue of cost is taken into the context of the entire disease and not just looked at as an upfront cost. For a country that wants to implement HPV screening as the primary method for cervical cancer screening, the initial cost may be more expensive than the traditional methods. We need to look at the long term cost"

Ms. Aadila Fakier
Public Affairs and Market
Access Manager Africa
BD

"Polio was not eradicated in Sub-Saharan Africa until significant progress was made in Nigeria – this will be the same with cervical cancer, unless we solve for it in Nigeria, it will not be solved for the continent."

"Let me congratulate Nigeria for starting a HPV program -There will be a national launch of the 1st HPV vaccine program on 24th October, 2023 -and this is no small feat!"

Ms. Vuyo Mjekula
Director: External Affairs
(Policy & Market Access)
MSD

"For private health insurers in terms of disease coverage, it is more cost effective to adopt preventive measures as this ensures that in the long run, there is a part of the population that will not fall sick."

Mr. Abdulkadri Osumah
Ag. MD/CEO
HCI Healthcare Ltd

"In most cases, for every one cancer patient, there are hundreds of others that are undiagnosed and hence uncaptured in the country health statistics. A lot of civil society organizations are working round the clock to create awareness around cervical cancer and especially about HPV vaccination. Collaboration and partnership are the key ingredients that will help address the gaps in the elimination of cervical cancer."

Dr Adamu Alhassan Umar
President/CEO
Nigerian Cancer Society







Participants

- 1. Mr. Director Kabiru**
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