

ASSOCIATION OF HEALTH SERVICE ADMINISTRATORS, GHANA (AHSAG)



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
27TH MARCH, 2020**

The Association of Health Service Administrators, Ghana (AHSAG) has monitored with keen interest the global and local developments and actions since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. We commend world leaders, governments, institutions and individuals and especially our gallant health workers who have thus far led the fight against the pandemic. We particularly acknowledge the efforts of the government in tackling the disease, particularly the bold decision to close our international borders and mandatorily quarantine all inbound international travelers.

The Association recognizes that some of the recommendations contained in its earlier press release issued on the 9th day of February 2020 at the onset of the pandemic have been useful in most of the interventions that have so far been rolled out.

The Association would, however, wish to put forth some further measures for consideration by government in our collective efforts at tackling the pandemic:

1. The Association calls for an immediate partial lockdown of the country by banning all inter-regional travels across the country. This will slow down the movement of people across the country, localize the spread of the virus and facilitate the identification of 'community spread cells' for easy contact tracing. This measure will also help in averting the huge logistical requirements that may be needed in an eventual total lockdown.
2. The Association further recommends that there should be mass testing, after the partial lockdown, for all persons within communities and institutions that have recorded or have been exposed to cases. We therefore urge government to procure more test kits in addition to the initial 50,000 test kits that are already being procured and the consignment that the country has received from Jack Ma.
3. Government should endeavor to cut the cost involved in quarantining foreign travelers into the country by selecting low to moderate hotel accommodation for such persons.

We all do not know how long this pandemic will last and therefore going for high end hotels could have dire financial implications for the country in the long run. In these dangerously difficult times, status (perceived or real) is of no essence, resources are, and therefore anyone caught up in this must understand that the state needs to conserve as much as possible to be able to soldier on. As managers in the health system, we are concerned about the cost in this particular intervention by government.

4. The national response team should put out a clear protocol on the proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) at the various stages of health care at the facility level in the wake of this pandemic. The vacuum is creating panic and raising tensions between staff and institutional managers in the use of very limited PPEs that facilities have managed to procure on the open market at astronomical prices.
5. The Association further calls on the national response team to up its communication game by briefing the public on the Covid – 19 state of the country at a specific time at least once a day in order not to leave any vacuum for rumour mongers to fill. The communication strategy at the moment has created an avenue for false information to be put out there from unverified sources and hence creating fear and alarm among citizens.
6. Despite the closure of our borders to our neighbouring countries, there still exist unapproved routes for people to sneak in and out of the country. The Association calls on government and the security agencies to intensify surveillance at those areas in order to prevent illegal entries and exits by people in these difficult times. We also use this opportunity to call on all residents along the country’s borders to remain vigilant and report such illegal entries to the security agencies. We should leave no stone unturned in our efforts to contain and eliminate this pandemic.
7. The nation Ghana is at the cross roads at this point in time and therefore requires concerted efforts and unity of purpose to overcome this pandemic. We therefore call on all state and non-state actors to collaborate and constantly share ideas in good faith for our collective good in this COVID-19 battle. The common global enemy at this point in time is COVID-19 and our collective survival depends on the patriotism we all demonstrate at this moment.
8. The Association commends all individual and institutional donors who have made various donations to health facilities for their philanthropic efforts that have helped to up our preparedness for COVID-19. We wish, however, to add that these logistics remain inadequate and we call on government and all public-spirited organizations to urgently support health institutions with more Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and other logistics to further enhance their capacity to protect their staff to respond adequately to the pandemic.
9. AHSAG takes note of the insurance policy announced by government for “frontline staff” in the fight against the pandemic. The Association, therefore, calls on government to give clarity to its definition of “frontline staff” as announced. The lack of clarity is

creating uneasiness among health staff leading to feet dragging among the various cadres of health staff. Most health staff are not sure whether the insurance policy would cover them in the event of any eventuality in their bid to fight the pandemic. Government should particularly take notice of the fact that team work approach is what pertains in the health sector for efficient delivery of services. In these difficult times therefore, we call on government to ensure that all categories of staff in the health sector are recognized and provided insurance cover for the roles they are playing in the management of the pandemic. Again, given the strict rules applicable under insurance contracts, AHSAG calls on government to make the name(s) of the insurance company or companies for this arrangement, the insured, and the range of risks being insured public.

10. The Association urges all Health Service Administrators to continue to attend to duty for the proper organization and management of health resources in the fight against the pandemic and to ensure continuous and efficient functioning of all health facilities across the country in these difficult times.
11. Finally, the Association wishes to admonish all citizens and residents to adhere strictly to hand hygiene by washing their hands at all times, using alcohol-based hand sanitizers, observing social distance, and reporting to the nearest health facility if they experience any symptoms of the disease.

We are all in this together. May the good Lord be our guide and our helper.

SIGNED:
FRED EFFAH-YEBOAH
PRESIDENT

SIGNED:
ABULAIS YARO HARUNA
PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER