

## Strategies to Improve the Control of COVID-19 in Nigeria

Sir,

According to the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) as on September 5, 2020, 162 new confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), and three deaths were confirmed in Nigeria. Currently, 54,905 cases have been recorded, 42,922 cases have been discharged, and 1054 deaths have been documented in 36 states and the capital territory of Nigeria.<sup>[1]</sup> The most affected age group in Nigeria are those between 31–40 years of age. Moreover, 34,767 Nigerian males got infected with COVID-19 equating to 64% of the total cases recorded in Nigeria while 19,976 Nigerian females got infected with COVID-19 equating to 25% of the total cases recorded in Nigeria, so far only 1% of the COVID-19 cases in Nigeria were attributed to patients travel history, 24% cases were as a result of contact with an infected person, and 75% cases were attributed to unknown exposure.<sup>[1]</sup> There is a need to strengthen the infectious disease surveillance system in Nigeria and reinforce international relations in terms of medical expertise, training, and support, which is vital for effective control of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>[2]</sup> However, a significant number of law-abiding Nigerian citizens adhered to the lockdown directives and COVID-19 preventive measures set up by the government.<sup>[1]</sup> Nevertheless, the high level of illiteracy in Nigeria, leading to citizen's noncompliance attitude with infectious disease control measures stipulated by the government, is a major limiting factor for infectious disease control in Nigeria.<sup>[3]</sup> Some Nigerians do not adhere to the precautionary measures meant for preventing COVID-19, and nonadherence to preventive measures increases the spread of COVID-19.<sup>[4]</sup> Therefore, there is a need to create more awareness regarding the COVID-19 pandemic among Nigerians living in the rural areas, which are mostly occupied by the uneducated class, mostly through the local radio stations and community health promotion workers.

The Nigerian government should increase the number of COVID-19 diagnostic and isolation centers/facilities in Nigeria, and as well increase the stockpile of valid diagnostic kits/reagents in those centers, to facilitate rapid diagnosis of COVID-19. This will expand the identification of suspected cases, thereby enabling rapid confirmation, isolation, and treatment of infected individuals in Nigeria.

This will subsequently decrease possible COVID-19 transmission across the 36 states in Nigeria and the federal capital territory. Furthermore, the neglected primary healthcare centers in numerous remote and poorly accessible areas in Nigeria should be fully equipped with COVID-19 testing facilities and a sufficient number of medical staff should be employed to manage those facilities for effective COVID-19 control in those remote areas.<sup>[5]</sup> Notably, age is a very crucial element in reducing an individual's chances of survival from COVID-19; older adults who are 65 years and above are at higher risk of mortality.<sup>[6]</sup> Although Nigeria has a much younger population, the Nigerian government should concentrate on enlightening and educating the aging population and striving to persuade them to conform with the COVID-19 public health preventive and control measures.

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### Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

### Chidiebere Emmanuel Okechukwu

*Department of Public Health and Infectious Diseases, Sapienza University of Rome, Piazzale Aldo Moro, Rome, Italy*

#### Address for correspondence:

*Dr. Chidiebere Emmanuel Okechukwu,  
Department of Public Health and Infectious Diseases, Sapienza University of Rome, Piazzale Aldo Moro 5, 00185 Rome, Italy.  
E-mail: [chidiebere.okechukwu@uniroma1.it](mailto:chidiebere.okechukwu@uniroma1.it)*

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