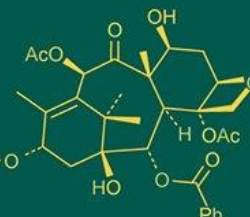
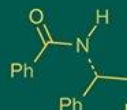
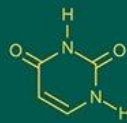
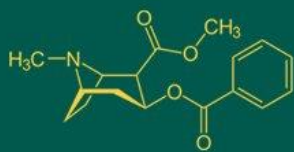


International Journal of Advanced Biochemistry Research



ISSN Print: 2617-4693
 ISSN Online: 2617-4707
 IJABR 2020; 4(1): 56-57
www.biochemjournal.com
 Received: 07-10-2019
 Accepted: 09-12-2019

OTOBO David Daniel
 College of Medicine and Health
 Sciences, Bingham University,
 Nigeria

The impact of the COVID pandemic on veterinary healthcare, its resultant effect on public healthcare in Nigeria and recommendations

OTOBO David Daniel

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26174693.2020.v4.i1a.124>

Abstract

On the 27th of February, 2020 when the pandemic hit Nigeria, most of the concerns were especially about human lives and health wellbeing. Not basically because a report had come about dogs being immune to the virus, but mainly because of fear of break down in civilization and high mortality reports from the western countries. In the healthcare industries, both home and abroad, there were a lot of challenges especially as regarded equipment, sufficient facilities and Personal protective equipment. Here, a lot of disadvantages met the status quo in Nigeria. However, the veterinary health institutes suffered in silence. As there staff also being essential had to wake up each day and put their lives at risk just to get to work. On the other hand, prices of a lot of live saving veterinary drugs increased and this made healthcare services on their end more expensive too. This then had a referred effect on the general public health of the society. Especially from the financial and nutritional angles.

Keywords: Pandemic, COVID, veterinary, Nigeria, healthcare, publication

Introduction

Due to many reasons, especially the movement restrictions implemented by the federal government, the high infectivity case prevalence we experienced and other short comings; there was a drop in the health seeking behaviour of veterinary clients for their animals. As people were not willing to be arrested and sanctioned to the mobile courts while taking their animals to the veterinary hospital ^[1]. Dare to say, it was not even an excuse a Nigerian law enforcer would have been willing to hear. Especially after seeing how the law did not spear a driver whose family was dying of “the hunger virus” as he called it, while weeping naked ^[2]. Moreover, in the health sector, there was a serious shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The case was not different in the Veterinary institutions. As most of the available equipment were redirected to hospital workers, front line staff, and maybe the ever-critical politicians. Although the lock down was a national sanction, it did not affect an elite and political few. As they used top-healthcare-grade PPEs for their social gathering, wedding and burial ceremonies ^[3-4]. Also, when the federal government borrowed funds, most financial allocations for healthcare were put into the covid-19 fighting efforts and rarely evenly shared amongst health institutions ^[5]. Even when a large financial loot was recovered by the country, it went into roads and structural projects, as the veterinary institutions suffered further conditional negligence ^[6].

Amid all these struggles and short comings, the cost of veterinary drugs increased. Hence, so did the general healthcare services by vets. This will further discourage clients from coming to veterinary hospitals to seek care for their animals. As the cost of drugs in the institute was even higher than pharmacological counterparts in the human healthcare industries. This had the possibility of promoting over the counter medications purchases, thus worsening antimicrobial resistance ^[7]. Furthermore, the prices of animal feeds, like every other thing in the country also witnessed and increase in cost. Hence, animal feeds may have had to be rationed to smaller dosages by farmers to their livestock.

Notwithstanding, livestock farmers still had products to sell. Such as poultry and diary produce. However, due to the covid-19 pandemic provoked policies, there were little-to-no customers to patronize them. Some people even resulted to advertising these goods on social media such as twitter to find intending customers ^[8].

Corresponding Author:
OTOBO David Daniel
 College of Medicine and Health
 Sciences, Bingham University,
 Nigeria

This amongst other reasons resulted in these farmers incurring losses. These resulted to increasing the prices of available goods to make up for the ones lost. This had a resonant effect on the prices of animal produce in the markets.

The impact on the public health of humans could be seen in the unavailability and inaccessibility of poultry, aquatic and diary produce such as eggs, fish, beef and milk due to the food insecurity that came with the COVID-19 pandemic. People were forced to live based on what they could find and what they could afford, thus living on a necessary but circumstantial imbalanced diet. Furthermore, the break down in civilization that resulted from the various protests and violence worsened the national food insecurity. Especially amongst the low- and middle-class Nigerians. As top class and elite citizens could even travel on holidays with their families out of the country and even go on pre-wedding shopping trips to Dubai, as they pleased during this same pandemic and lockdown period ^[9-10].

Recommendations

1. The veterinary institution in Nigeria need to make their voices heard and importance more significantly known to the Nigerian Government and law makers
2. The institution needs to establish a better stand in the ministries of health and agriculture
3. The national heads of veterinary medicine in Nigeria should work towards an alternative channel of financing.
4. In times of public health crisis, the government should make efforts to evenly recognize the crucial role of all healthcare institutions

Conflict of interest

Author declares no conflict of interest

Funding

Author declares no external source of funding for this paper.

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