

THE ADVOCACY BULLETIN

The Nigerian Physicians Advocacy Group



COVID-19 UPDATE AS DELTA VARIANT SPREADS...

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Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused so much difficulty and destabilization worldwide, be it in healthcare, education, social life, government, and other areas. None has been spared.

When we got the *COVID-19 vaccines* in December 2020, my colleagues and I were elated and overjoyed because we considered it a *life-saving measure*. We got vaccinated en masse and we recommended and even administered the vaccines.

We in the *Association of Nigerian Physicians in the Americas (ANPA)* were at the forefront of bringing information about the science, the virus, and the vaccines to our communities. We held numerous conferences, webinars, virtual town halls, shared infographics, etc about COVID-19 and its vaccines.

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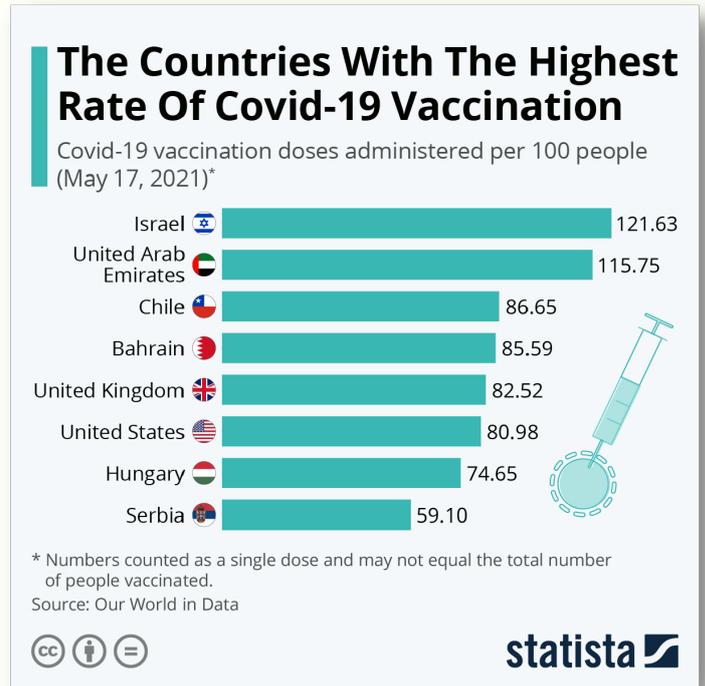
LOBBYIST: THE RELEVANCE OF THE NIGERIAN DIASPORA IN ACHIEVING GOOD GOVERNANCE.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Overall, we feel these measures were very helpful in encouraging members of our communities to get vaccinated. However, in a lot of areas, misinformation and disinformation through social media had traveled faster than the physicians, scientists, and government agencies! Unfortunately, these false narratives have set in and increased vaccine hesitancy in various communities.

For the avoidance of doubt, the current COVID-19 vaccines in the US are highly safe and efficacious even against the much dreaded *Delta variant*. It prevents serious illness, hospitalization, and death. The problem is that in rare cases in some vaccinated individuals, it can produce very high viral load in the nasal cavity and risk the possibility of infection spreading.

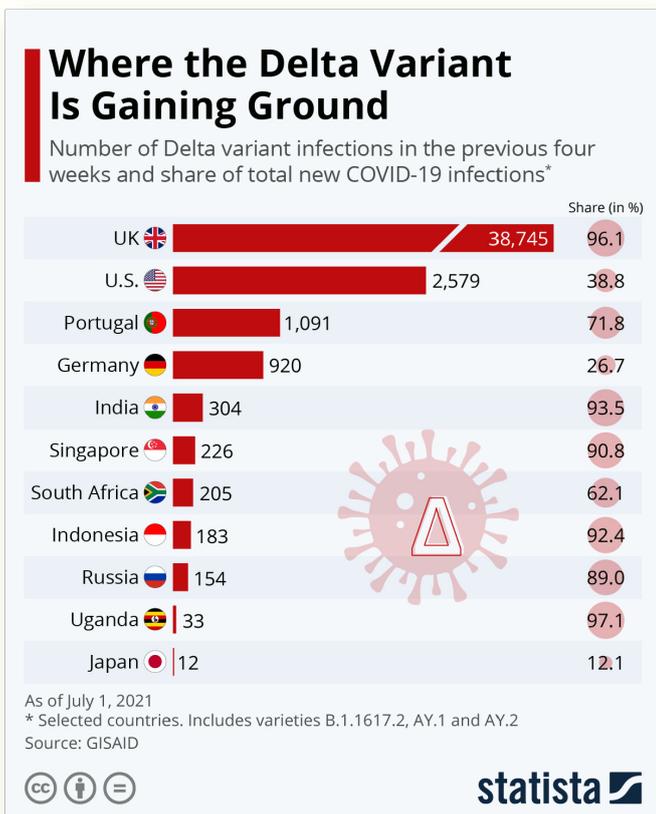
According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as of this time, more than 50% of US counties have less than 40% vaccination coverage while about 63% of counties have substantial or high viral spread. This makes it imperative for different mitigation recommendations to be tailored to particular communities and not necessarily the vaccination status of the individual.



The current "4th wave" of COVID-19 infections is fueled by the changing nature of the virus. Viruses are simple organisms that frequently MUTATE. These mutations may make the virus more or less consequential. This COVID-19 virus has mutated repeatedly during this raging pandemic. The current iteration of the virus that has become dominant is known as the Delta variant. It was first described in India.

The characteristics of the Delta variant show it to be more easily transmissible with a replicating capacity that produces a much higher viral load in the nasal cavity. This has made it easier for the virus to produce more serious illness in people with less comorbidities as well as younger persons amongst others. The fear is that the persistent perpetuation of the virus may lead to even deadlier strains! Our hospital systems are already stretched thin!!!

Consequently, the CDC on Tuesday, July 27th, 2021 reversed itself by recommending face masks in indoor public areas irrespective of COVID-19 vaccination status (in communities with substantial and high COVID-19 transmission rates).



They also recommended for K-12 Schools to require all students, staff, teachers, and visitors to wear masks indoors (vaccinated or not) until such a time when vaccination is widely available to all children and there are adequate vaccination rates in the communities for better transmission control.

As of the time of this writing, the US Government is also considering mandating COVID-19 vaccination or frequent testing for all its employees.

The main reason is the current trend of infection. According to reports, 97% of current COVID-19 infections are in the UNVACCINATED and 99.5% of the deaths are also amongst the UNVACCINATED!!! Hence, this current wave of infections has been termed “The COVID-19 Pandemic of the UNVACCINATED”.

It is obvious that to save more lives, we need to get more people urgently vaccinated! While we are doing that, we need to continue certain mitigation measures like face masking, physical distancing, hand washing, and others. These measures will help decrease infection spread, hospitalization, and death.

Now is the time for a call to action. We all have a role to play in the march to get back close to our usual lives. We need to talk to our families and friends and answer their questions about the COVID-19 virus and vaccines patiently and candidly. We all want to get back to "normal". We need to encourage those of us that remain unvaccinated to get the vaccine and keep our communities safe and healthy. Our ANPA motto remains "A Healthier Nigeria in a Healthier World".

HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP?
www.NPAGroup.org

VOTER REGISTRATION IN ALIADE - UPDATE

Dr Susan Edionwe, MD

The continuous voter registration process has resumed as of June 28, 2021 in Nigeria. INEC has introduced a new process to voter registration and that is online pre-registration. Fresh registrants are now able to use the INEC Online Voter registration portal at www.cvr.gov.inec.ng or cvr.inecnigeria.org to pre-register. Once complete, registrants can book an appointment at an INEC location or local government area office for photographs and fingerprinting. Citizens are also able to change their registrations or file for replacement PVCs online.

This new process allows for NGOs such as NPAG and SHIFT Nigeria to participate in helping potential voters pre-register for their PVC cards, which is an incredible opportunity.

To test this process, NPAG and SHIFT Nigeria have piloted a voter sensitization & pre-registration project in Aliade, Benue State. This process encourages new registrants to vote and provides computer and internet access and assistance to Nigerians in areas of Aliade that don't have access. So far, we have found that one NGO volunteer is able to pre-register at least 200 potential voters through this sensitization project. These encouraging results will be used to create a volunteer force that can help pre-register tens to hundreds of thousands of Nigerians in key races across the country. NPAG and SHIFT Nigeria will also focus on how to help pre-registrants complete the registration process in-person and are currently working on solutions for this. Stay tuned! NPAG plans to leave a major mark on voting in Nigeria!



Message from the INEC Chairman

The LOBBY(IST)



The Relevance of the Nigerian Diaspora in Achieving Good Governance.

Goodness Esu, Lagos Nigeria

On Saturday 10th of July 2021, the Nigerian Physicians Advocacy group (NPAG) held an Inaugural Event: A Virtual Conversation with Professor Kingsley Moghalu, the UN Development Program Special Envoy on Post-Covid Development Finance for Africa, Former CBN Deputy Governor, Nigeria Presidential Candidate, 2019 and Nigeria Presidential Aspirant, 2023. The event was an informative session as professor Moghalu educated those present on the power of the diaspora in making a positive change in Nigeria and achieving good governance.

He began by stating that the Nigerian diaspora has the highest level of diaspora remittance in Africa as the Nigerian diaspora remit twenty to twenty-five billion dollars on an average each year, but stated that this investment is misdirected as this remittance does not enhance or improve the country in any way until this remittance is used indirectly effecting a change in the political sector of the country. He gave an example of how this remittance can be used effectively by referencing his 2019 presidential running vision to enhance diaspora involvement by creating a diaspora return fund of five hundred billion naira (1.5 billion dollars) to be used in subsidizing the salaries of various professionals in the diaspora to enable them to come back home and train other Nigerians or even set up their various practices in the country. The subsidization will cover 75% of the current salaries of those professionals and the other 25% will be their patriotism fee towards the growth of the nation.

This subsidization will be done for five years after which these professionals are free to either remain in the country or go back.

He went on to state that the right way for the Nigerian diaspora to play a role in the Nigerian political sector is by making their political views and intentions clear. He said the Nigerian diaspora are highly respected because of their independence from the Nigerian government; he believes the diaspora should come together like they do for the US elections and raise enough to support the campaign for the right candidate for our nation to be able to enhance good governance in all governmental levels. He suggested that the diaspora can also join in the fight for constitutional restructuring. He, however, stated that with poor leadership the restructuring may not take place and emphasized that the first priority of the diaspora should be supporting the campaign to elect good leaders at all government levels.

He addressed the problem of having just two major parties in Nigeria and stated that the main reason other parties cannot thrive is due to lack of funding; he also discussed other issues like what region the next president should come from, ways at which the current incurred debts can be handled and addressed other frequently asked questions.

To listen to the full conversation please click the link below.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1F9GoFI0nTQguYaVQGuzof6ok6fqJGAV3/view?usp=sharing>

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In the ever-unpredictable world of the COVID-19 virus, please keep safe! Wear a mask, wash hands, maintain social distancing. Get vaccinated!

Thank you for all you do for your families, patients, and communities.