

Empowering pharmaceutical industry through quality systems

By Chukwuma Muanya



The United States Pharmacopeia Convention (USP) has said it is possible for Nigeria to become Africa's pharmaceutical industry leader in the next five years with a well-trained workforce.

Chief of Party USP in Nigeria, Dr. Chimezie Anyakora, on Tuesday, at the induction of pharmacy graduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University (NAU) Awka, Anambra State said: "We have intelligent and talented people here in Nigeria and we can achieve this if we have committed Universities like Nnamdi Azikiwe University that want to become relevant.

"As we celebrate your success today we are also celebrating a turning point in pharmaceutical education through the Pharmaceutical Quality System curriculum. The pharmaceutical sector will be totally different if the universities are able to continue graduating students who understand the international requirements of quality in terms of pharmaceutical facilities, documentation and processes in pharmaceutical manufacturing.

“With this in mind, we hope to continue working with the Pharmacists Council of Nigeria so that university-level curriculum can mobilise those who will lead Nigeria’s pharmaceutical sector in the future. And, I personally look forward to working with you to bring better medicines—and ultimately—better health to Nigeria.”

The USP implements the Promoting the Quality of Medicines (PQM), an initiative funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Anyakora said Nigeria has long lived a contradiction—it has one of the region’s greatest pools of medical know-how, but still suffers some of the world’s worst health statistics. “My question today is: as this class joins our country’s corps of pharmaceutical experts, how can we ensure that this generation will be the one that safeguards—once and for all—access to quality-assured medicines throughout Nigeria? Doing so would be the single biggest contribution to eliminating preventable deaths in this country,” he said.

The pharmaceutical Chemist added: “It is difficult to admit, but we are well aware that Nigeria ranks among the top contributors to the global disease burden. Only India has a higher rate in death due to postpartum haemorrhage; we represent nearly one-quarter of the world’s malaria-related deaths; and Human Immuno-deficiency Virus (HIV)/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and non-communicable diseases cases are also sizeable.

“Why is this happening? Like in most low and middle-income countries, the health care system in Nigeria is weak. Coupled with a lack of access to quality-assured medicines, the consequences for the population are even more disastrous.”

Anyakora said Nigerians naturally think first of the pharmaceutical supply when they seek solutions to the challenge of ensuring access to quality medicines. But, he said, simply pumping more or supposedly better products into the system will not solve the problem. “The system must be able to regulate those products, or expansion could overburden supply chains or open the door even wider to drug counterfeiters,” Anyakora said.

The USP Chief added: “So, let us look at a dual approach to medicines quality assurance that involves both producers and regulators. Let us improve performance on the pitch by training both our players and referees to be better.”

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