

GHANA PRIMARY HEALTH CARE CAMPAIGN

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Ghana Primary Health Care Campaign Calls on Government to Fulfill its Free COVID-19 Treatment Promise

The Ghana Primary Health Care Campaign led by the Alliance for Reproductive Health Rights (ARHR) calls on government to ensure adequate availability of medicines and other logistics required for the effective management COVID-19 cases in Ghana especially at the primary health care level.

The call has been necessitated by the many complaints about the high cost of testing; inadequate facilities for testing and diagnosing, and the high cost of COVID-19 case management medicines by members of the public who have had recent contact with the COVID-19 health care response systems set up by the Government. Though these complaints and concerns have been in the background for some time, the public was awakened by the accounts of a frontline worker, a biomedical scientist and twice positive patient; Mr. Prosper Senyo Sokpe during an interview with TV3 on 18th of January 2021.

Besides the many horrifying details shared by the frontline worker, he narrated his ordeal in relation to lack of COVID-19 treatment medicines at a facility where he was admitted and having to fall on family and friends to save his life. The issue that made the situation dire for Mr. Sopke was the cost of the drug. He said;

“so what happened was that a drug was written, a prescription was given to a friend who came around and he said he went to go and purchase the drug, when he got there just 1gram of the drug for 24 hours was GHC1400. And then I needed to take another for 48 hours, that’s GHC2800 and they continued administering that same drug and there were some other drugs also, at the end of the day I was just surprised because we’ve all been listening to our president that treatment of COVID is free”.

We join this frontline worker and all other frontline workers in urging Government to ensure that COVID-19 related services are indeed free and accessible to all people. As a country, our seriousness in containing the pandemic must show in the actions of Government and the relevant agencies under it, especially as it has recently been discovered that there are about at least three Covid-19 variants which have spread across about 57 countries in the past few months and the pandemic will get more dire for people and countries.

It is our fervent hope that the Government of Ghana will work assiduously towards actualizing its commitment at the World Health Assembly in May 2020 which resolved unanimously on the importance of “transparent, equitable and timely access to quality, safe and efficacious diagnostics, therapeutics, medicines and vaccines”.

Regrettably, the other details provided by the frontline worker exposes further the well-known secret of our fragile primary health care system which require urgent attention. The Biomedical Laboratory Scientist in this case who found himself in a hospital in Accra, upon testing positive at the facility could not get an ambulance to transfer him to the COVID-19 treatment facility, he had to rely on a friend to drive him in a private vehicle to the facility. This reality begs the question of the situation in the country’s primary healthcare intake facilities around the country for non-health workers, if this is the situation of a hospital in Accra for a frontline worker.

We call on the Government of Ghana to in the immediate term ensure availability and access to adequate COVID-19 case management medicines and logistics while also ensuring the safety of frontlines workers and all people alike. Further, we call on government to prioritise investment to improve primary health care in the country to ensure access to health for all people irrespective of what region, district or community they live in or their financial ability. Whilst concluding we believe it is of utmost importance that Government address the following questions to ensure the safety of all people living in Ghana:

1. What are the plans to ensure testing, diagnosing and treatment for COVID-19 at the CHPS zones/community health facilities primary care levels?
2. What are the provisions to ensure safe transportation of COVID patients to avoid situations where Covid positive patients will have to travel on public transport for long distances to seek care?
3. What is the national response to dealing with the community spread which is where we are at presently?
4. Clearly the increase in incidence has stretched/compromised CONTACT Tracing. What is the plan to strengthen current contact tracing operations?
5. In view of the above when will the current national response plan be reviewed?

Signed:

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