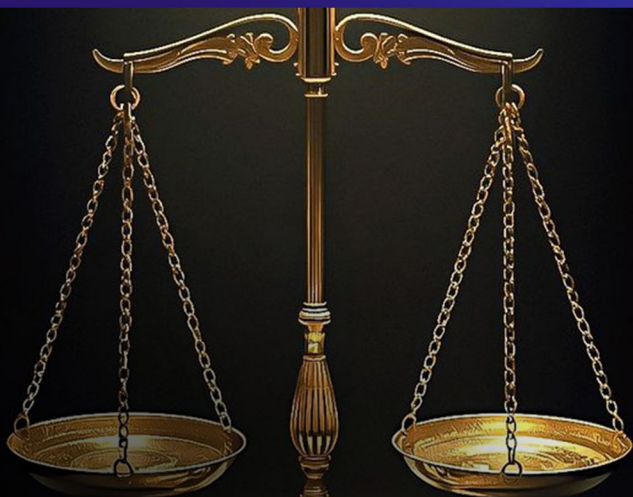




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Healthcare Accountability Expanded as Court Confirms FCCPC's Investigative Powers

In a landmark judgment delivered on 15th April 2026, the Federal High Court in Abuja affirmed the authority of the Federal

Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) to investigate patient complaints relating to healthcare services. The decision arose from a suit filed by

Lifebridge Medical Diagnostic Centre Ltd, which had challenged the Commission's jurisdiction to investigate allegations of medical negligence, arguing that such powers could not be exercised without a prior concurrent-jurisdiction arrangement with the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN).

Justice Emeka Nwite rejected the argument in its entirety, holding that a healthcare provider offering diagnostic services for reward qualifies as an "undertaking" under the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2018. The Court further held that complaints concerning consumer satisfaction and the quality of healthcare services may fall within the FCCPC's consumer protection mandate even where the sector is also professionally regulated. Importantly, the judgment drew a clear distinction between professional discipline of medical practitioners, which remains the



responsibility of professional regulatory bodies, and consumer protection oversight relating to fairness, quality, standards and treatment received by patients, which falls within the FCCPC's statutory remit. The Court also held that the absence of a formal coordination agreement with another regulator does not suspend or extinguish powers expressly conferred on the FCCPC by statute.

The judgment significantly strengthens patient protection and accountability within the healthcare sector by recognising that healthcare providers may be subject to both professional regulation and consumer protection oversight. Healthcare institutions should strengthen complaint-resolution mechanisms, clinical governance and service-quality assurance systems, while regulators should develop coordinated enforcement frameworks that protect patient rights without creating unnecessary jurisdictional conflicts.

NAFDAC Proposes Mandatory Sodium Limits to Combat Diet-Related Diseases

The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has proposed the Reduction of Sodium in Processed and Pre-Packaged Foods

Regulations 2026, signalling a significant policy shift towards reducing the burden of diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Nigeria. The proposed

Regulations would introduce mandatory maximum sodium limits for specified

categories of processed and pre-packaged foods, require manufacturers to

progressively reformulate products through phased sodium reduction targets, and

mandate clear sodium labelling to assist consumers in making healthier dietary choices. The proposal adopts a phased

implementation strategy beginning with a 15 per cent reduction in sodium content and is aligned with the World Health

Organization's target of achieving a 30 per cent reduction in population sodium intake by 2030.

Under the proposed framework, sodium benchmarks would apply to a broad range of commonly consumed products,

including bread, instant noodles, processed meats, bouillon cubes, sauces, seasonings

and snack foods. The Regulations would also empower NAFDAC to enforce

compliance, requiring manufacturers and importers to ensure that regulated

products satisfy the prescribed sodium thresholds before entering the Nigerian market. Public health and nutrition experts have welcomed the proposal, noting that reducing sodium levels in processed foods is one of the most effective

population-based interventions for

lowering the incidence of hypertension, stroke and cardiovascular disease.

If adopted, the proposed Regulations would represent a significant advancement in

preventive public health regulation by

addressing dietary risk factors through

enforceable food standards. Their success would depend on robust stakeholder

engagement, effective enforcement,

regular monitoring of compliance and

sustained public education to encourage healthier dietary habits. Periodic review of the sodium benchmarks in light of evolving scientific evidence would also be necessary to ensure that the regulatory framework

remains responsive to Nigeria's public health needs.

Breaking the Cost Barrier: Renewed Calls for Public Funding of Sickle Cell Treatment

The Oladipupo Foundation for Sickle Cell has urged the Federal Government to subsidise stem cell transplantation for people living with sickle cell disorder, arguing that the procedure remains financially unattainable for most Nigerian families despite its curative potential.

The Foundation maintained that stem cell transplantation represents a significant scientific advancement capable of improving both survival and quality of life for sickle cell patients. However, the prohibitive cost of treatment continues to limit access, prompting calls for government

intervention through subsidies and partnerships with donor organisations. Beyond treatment financing, the Foundation

advocated equal employment opportunities for persons living with sickle cell disorder and greater societal support to combat stigma and improve social inclusion. The advocacy also reinforced the message that sickle cell disorder is a manageable medical condition rather than a death sentence.

The campaign highlights the growing intersection between healthcare financing and the constitutional objective of ensuring access to healthcare. While Nigeria has made progress in establishing local bone

marrow transplant services, affordability remains a major obstacle. The federal and state governments should prioritise statutory funding mechanisms for high-cost, life-saving treatments, expand health insurance coverage for eligible transplant procedures, and strengthen anti-discrimination protections for persons living with genetic disorders. Such reforms would promote equitable access to advanced care while advancing the rights and dignity of patients with sickle cell disorder.



Prescription-Only Antibiotics: Stakeholders Press for Stronger Controls Against Antimicrobial Resistance

The Consumer Advocacy for Food Safety and Nutrition Initiative (CAFSANI) has called on the Federal Government to prohibit the sale of antibiotics without a valid

prescription, warning that indiscriminate access to these medicines is accelerating antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Speaking after a webinar on “Antimicrobial Resistance in the Nigerian Ecosystem: A Growing Public Health Concern,” the organisation

highlighted AMR as one of the most pressing global health threats, currently

contributing to an estimated 700,000 deaths annually, with projections suggesting the figure could rise dramatically by 2050 if decisive action is not taken.

According to CAFSANI, Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan African countries bear a

disproportionate burden of AMR due to weak regulatory enforcement,

self-medication, inappropriate prescribing, the circulation of substandard medicines, and the indiscriminate use of antibiotics in livestock production. The organisation

advocated stricter regulation of antimicrobial distribution, enhanced

laboratory capacity, increased funding for surveillance and research, and full

implementation of Nigeria’s National Action

Plan on AMR. It also stressed the need for a coordinated One Health approach,

recognising the interconnectedness of human, animal and environmental health. Healthcare professionals, farmers,

researchers and the public were urged to adopt responsible antimicrobial practices to preserve the effectiveness of existing medicines.

The recommendations underscore the need for stronger legal and regulatory

mechanisms governing the prescription, dispensing and use of antimicrobials.

Regulators should rigorously enforce

prescription-only requirements, strengthen oversight of pharmaceutical supply chains, and impose effective sanctions for unlawful dispensing. Medical institutions should

institutionalise antimicrobial stewardship programmes, while legislation and policy should reinforce the One Health framework to address AMR across the human,

veterinary and environmental sectors. Such measures are essential to safeguarding

patient safety and protecting the long-term efficacy of antimicrobial therapies.

Public Vigilance as a Regulatory Tool: Lagos Intensifies Campaign Against Medical Quackery

The Lagos State Government has reinforced its campaign against medical quackery by calling on residents to actively identify and report unlicensed healthcare facilities

operating within the state. The appeal was made during a public sensitisation

programme organised by the Health Facility Monitoring and Accreditation Agency (HEFAMAA) in Badagry to educate

communities on the dangers posed by

unqualified healthcare providers. The Agency emphasised that effective

healthcare regulation depends not only on government enforcement but also on the active participation of communities and other stakeholders.

HEFAMAA urged residents to seek

treatment only from healthcare facilities displaying its official accreditation logo, which signifies compliance with the

regulatory standards prescribed under

Section 63 of the Lagos State Health Sector Reform Law. According to the Agency, its statutory mandate encompasses the

inspection, accreditation, licensing and continuous monitoring of healthcare

facilities to ensure that only duly qualified providers render medical services. The awareness campaign extended to

healthcare institutions, traditional

authorities, markets, motor parks and

educational institutions, where members of the public received guidance on identifying accredited facilities and reporting

suspected cases of illegal medical practice.

The campaign underscores the importance of robust regulatory oversight in

safeguarding patient safety and maintaining public confidence in the healthcare system. Existing legal and regulatory frameworks should be complemented by stricter

enforcement of licensing and inspection

requirements, public access to verified registers of accredited healthcare facilities, and swift sanctions against unlicensed

operators. Institutionalising whistleblower mechanisms, regular public awareness

campaigns and closer collaboration among regulatory agencies, professional bodies and community leaders would further strengthen efforts to eradicate medical quackery and improve the quality of healthcare delivery.



Senate Backs Health Levy Reform to Strengthen Prevention and Healthcare Financing

The Senate has passed the Customs, Excise Tariff, etc. (Consolidation) Act (Amendment) Bill, 2025, introducing a fiscal measure

designed to improve public health financing while addressing the growing prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in

Nigeria. The Bill amends Section 21(3) of the Customs, Excise Tariff, etc. (Consolidation) Act by replacing the existing fixed excise duty of ₦10 per litre on sugar-sweetened beverages with a levy calculated as a percentage of the retail price, thereby creating a more

responsive taxation framework.

Beyond reforming the excise regime, the Bill establishes a mechanism for channelling a portion of the revenue generated into health promotion initiatives, disease prevention programmes, strengthening primary

healthcare services and expanding health insurance coverage for vulnerable

populations. The legislation reflects an

increasing reliance on fiscal policy as a public health instrument, using taxation not only to discourage the consumption of products

associated with adverse health outcomes but also to generate sustainable domestic

funding for healthcare delivery. The measure is expected to support efforts to reduce the burden of preventable non-communicable diseases while enhancing the resilience of

Nigeria's healthcare system.



The Bill illustrates the growing integration of fiscal and public health policy in addressing chronic disease and healthcare financing.

Effective implementation will require a transparent legal framework governing the collection, allocation and utilisation of the levy to ensure that the revenue is applied exclusively to its intended health objectives. Robust accountability mechanisms, periodic reporting and independent oversight will be essential to promote public confidence, maximise the public health impact of the levy and ensure that fiscal interventions translate into measurable improvements in healthcare outcomes.

Health Insurance Mandate Extended to Nigeria's Digital Workforce

The Federal Government has directed operators of app-based transport, food delivery and logistics platforms to ensure that workers engaged through their platforms are enrolled in health insurance schemes. Issued by the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA), the directive gives effect to the compulsory health insurance provisions of the National Health Insurance Authority Act 2022 and aligns with the 2025 Presidential directive on mandatory health insurance for all Nigerians and legal residents.

The directive requires digital platform operators to facilitate health insurance coverage for independent contractors and self-employed persons providing services through their platforms. Compliance with the requirement will form part of the conditions for obtaining relevant licences, permits and regulatory approvals, while failure to comply may constitute a breach of the NHIA Act. The measure addresses longstanding concerns about the limited social protection available to gig economy workers, many of whom bear healthcare costs personally because they fall outside traditional employer-sponsored health benefit arrangements.

The directive marks an important step towards extending health insurance coverage

beyond the conventional employer-employee relationship. Its effectiveness, however, will depend on clear regulatory guidelines

defining the obligations of digital platform operators, appropriate enforcement mechanisms and affordable insurance

options for independent contractors. Greater collaboration among the NHIA, labour

regulators, state health insurance agencies and digital platforms will be necessary to

improve compliance, reduce out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure and ensure that

workers in the gig economy enjoy meaningful access to essential health services.



Lawmakers Advance Comprehensive Alcohol Control Bill to Tackle Public Health Risks

The House of Representatives has initiated legislative action to establish a comprehensive national framework for regulating alcohol in Nigeria through the proposed Control, Regulation and Reduction of Alcohol-Related Harm Bill. Having passed its first reading, the Bill seeks to regulate the production, importation, distribution, advertising, marketing and consumption of alcoholic beverages, while introducing enhanced safeguards to protect minors and other vulnerable groups.

The proposed legislation adopts a preventive public health approach to reducing alcohol-related harm rather than imposing prohibition. It aims to strengthen restrictions on alcohol marketing and access, improve public education and harm-reduction initiatives, enhance data collection and enforcement mechanisms, and align Nigeria's regulatory framework with recognised international public health standards. The Bill also seeks to balance public health objectives with the legitimate commercial interests of manufacturers and distributors by encouraging industry participation throughout the legislative

process. Its introduction reflects growing concern over the rising incidence of alcohol abuse, particularly among young people, and the associated consequences for road safety, mental health, domestic violence, crime and overall public health.

The proposed legislation represents a significant opportunity to replace Nigeria's fragmented approach to alcohol regulation with a coherent national legal framework. If enacted, effective implementation will require clearly defined regulatory responsibilities, evidence-based advertising restrictions, robust age-verification measures, and consistent enforcement across all jurisdictions. Sustained public education, routine monitoring of alcohol-related health indicators and collaboration among public health authorities, law enforcement agencies, industry stakeholders and civil society will be essential to reducing alcohol-related harm while ensuring that regulatory measures remain proportionate, transparent and responsive to evolving public health challenges.

Nigeria Introduces Comprehensive Regulatory Framework for Digital Pharmacy Services

The Federal Government has enacted the Electronic Pharmacy Regulations 2026, replacing the 2021 Online Pharmacy

Regulations with a more comprehensive framework for regulating the rapidly

expanding digital pharmacy sector. The

Regulations modernise the legal framework for electronic pharmaceutical services by recognising emerging digital business models, strengthening regulatory oversight and enhancing patient protection within online medicine supply chains.

Among the most significant reforms is the formal recognition of two categories of operators: Electronic Pharmaceutical Service

Providers (EPSPs), which directly dispense

medicines through digital platforms, and Electronic Pharmacy Aggregators (EPAs), which provide the technological infrastructure connecting licensed pharmacies with consumers. The Regulations also introduce more flexible registration pathways while preserving professional accountability through the oversight of a registered

Superintendent Pharmacist.

A National Electronic Pharmacy Platform (NEPP) is established as the central hub for e-pharmacy transactions, prescription

verification and medicine traceability. The framework further clarifies the categories of medicines that may be supplied through

digital channels and expressly permits the online distribution of specified self-care medicines. It also prescribes clear

dispensing limits by requiring EPSPs to supply medicines strictly in accordance with a treating physician's prescription, with any increase in quantity supported by documented clinical justification. Additionally,

consumers are granted the right to return

expired or tampered pharmaceutical

products, reinforcing protections under the Patients' Bill of Rights. The Regulations also strengthen data governance by aligning

digital pharmacy operations with the Nigeria Data Protection Act through a centralised compliance framework.

The Regulations represent a significant advancement in the regulation of digital healthcare by balancing innovation with

patient safety and professional accountability. Their success will depend on effective

implementation, rigorous oversight by the Pharmacy Council of Nigeria, strict enforcement of prescription verification and data protection requirements, and sustained public awareness to ensure that expanded digital access to medicines does not

compromise safety, privacy or the integrity of pharmaceutical services.

Proposed Public Health Institute Sparks Debate Over Institutional Overlap

The proposed National Institute for Public Health and Infectious Diseases

(Establishment) Bill, 2025 has generated

significant debate over the optimal structure of Nigeria's public health system. During a public hearing before the House of

Representatives Committee on Infectious Diseases, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) argued that the proposed institute would duplicate

statutory responsibilities already vested in the NCDC under the NCDC Act 2018.

Concerns were raised that assigning similar responsibilities for disease surveillance,

outbreak response, laboratory coordination, public health research and implementation of the International Health Regulations to a new institution could create uncertainty over leadership, accountability and operational command during public health emergencies.

The NCDC further questioned the fiscal

implications of establishing a parallel

institution with its own governance

structure, workforce and administrative

infrastructure, particularly in light of

substantial investments already made in strengthening the country's surveillance

systems, laboratory network and emergency response capacity. It also expressed concern

over proposals to finance the institute partly through the Basic Health Care Provision Fund. Proponents of the Bill, however,

maintained that a dedicated institute would enhance Nigeria's preparedness for future epidemics by integrating disease prevention, surveillance, diagnosis, research and

management within a coordinated national framework and by leveraging existing public health infrastructure.

We are of the view that there is the need for legislative coherence in public health

governance. Institutional reforms should strengthen, rather than fragment, the

country's disease surveillance and

emergency response architecture. Before

establishing new public institutions, careful consideration should be given to existing statutory mandates, resource implications and inter-agency coordination. Where

institutional gaps exist, targeted

amendments to existing legislation and

investment in current public health

infrastructure may offer a more efficient and sustainable approach than creating parallel regulatory structures.