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LEGAL PRACTITIONERS

## MEDICAL LAW DIGEST



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# Senate Advances Bill to Establish Specialized Malaria Agency



A Bill seeking to establish the National Agency for Malaria Eradication (NAME) has passed the second reading at the Nigerian Senate. The proposed agency will serve as an independent body responsible for coordinating national malaria policies, managing funding, and advancing research into malaria vaccines and genetic innovations.

The sponsor of the Bill highlighted the devastating impact of malaria in Nigeria, which records over 184,000 malaria-related deaths annually. He stressed that the disease contributes significantly to maternal mortality, anemia, miscarriages, stillbirths, and infant deaths. He also noted the limitations of existing institutions and called for a more focused and better-resourced agency.

The bill received wide support from senators across political parties, who agreed on the need for a dedicated agency to streamline Nigeria's malaria response and eliminate overlap and inefficiencies in the current system.

The Bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Health, which is expected to hold a public hearing and submit its report within four weeks. This marks an important legislative step toward ending malaria in Nigeria through targeted policy and scientific coordination.

Another Bill to Regulate Surrogacy

Passes First Reading in House of Representatives

On May 21, 2025, the first reading of a Bill aimed at regulating surrogacy in Nigeria scaled through the House of Representatives. The proposed law titled: A Bill for an Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Women, Particularly in Relation to Surrogacy and for Related Matters, seeks to ensure that surrogacy is conducted ethically and in a rights-based manner.

The Bill prohibits commercial surrogacy, allowing only voluntary arrangements without financial reward beyond reimbursement for medical and pregnancy-related costs. Surrogates must be at least 21 years old, receive counselling, and provide informed, uncoerced consent. The Bill also guarantees access to prenatal and postnatal care for surrogates.

It mandates counselling for intending parents, bans the commodification of children, and sets strict oversight for all parties involved in surrogacy—including agencies, healthcare providers, and egg donors. Violations could attract penalties of up to ₦2million, two years' imprisonment, or both.

A similar Bill had previously scaled second reading in October 2024 and was referred to the House Committee on Healthcare Services

# House of Representatives Calls for Nationwide Mandatory Diphtheria Immunisation

The House of Representatives has called on the Federal Government to enforce compulsory diphtheria immunisation, as well as mass testing and treatment, across all 774 Local Government Areas in Nigeria. Lawmakers expressed concern over the alarming rise in diphtheria cases, citing 41,978 suspected infections and 1,279 related deaths between May 2022 and February 2025. It was also noted that only 19.7% of affected children had received full doses of the diphtheria vaccine, highlighting a significant gap in immunisation coverage.

In response, the House directed the Federal Ministry of Health, the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA), and the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) to intensify nationwide vaccination efforts, testing, and treatment services through health centres. The Ministry of Information and National Orientation was also tasked with conducting awareness campaigns to educate the public on diphtheria prevention, symptoms, and the importance

of early intervention.’

To ensure accountability and effectiveness, the House mandated its Committees on Health and Health Institutions to assess the capacity and preparedness of health facilities to manage diphtheria cases. The Committees are expected to report their findings within four weeks to guide further legislative action.



# Reps Push for Free Cancer Screening & Subsidised Treatment



The House of Representatives has urged the Federal Government to initiate free cancer screening and subsidised treatment programmes. The motion highlights cancer as a growing health crisis in Nigeria, with many patients unable to afford diagnosis and care—especially low-income earners.

The House directed its Committee on Healthcare Services to collaborate with the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, and other relevant agencies to establish a mechanism for the Federal Government to provide subsidies for cancer treatment and related drugs to ameliorate the suffering of patients.

If implemented, this initiative could significantly reduce financial barriers and improve access to cancer care across Nigeria.



# Psychiatrists Urge Anti-Bullying Law and Safer Environments for Children

Psychiatrists have raised concerns over the increasing prevalence of bullying in Nigerian schools, especially tertiary and secondary institutions, calling for urgent legal reforms to protect vulnerable children. The physicians advocate for the National Assembly to enact anti-bullying legislation that would penalise perpetrators and ensure appropriate support and compensation for victims. Experts highlighted the profound impacts of bullying—ranging from anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem to more severe outcomes such as suicide—and stressed that bullying often stems from dysfunctional family environments. They recommend a comprehensive approach including policy development, institutional enforcement, awareness campaigns, and community engagement to create safer, more supportive environment for children.



# Lagos State Adopts National Reproductive Health Policy to Enhance Maternal and Child Healthcare

The Suicide Prevention Advocacy Working Group has called for coordinated efforts among stakeholders to facilitate the passage of the Suicide Prevention Bill currently before the National Assembly. The Bill, which has passed its first reading, is pending a second reading.

According to the group, effective suicide prevention requires a multi-pronged approach involving community participation, strengthened healthcare services, and policy reform. Decriminalisation of attempted suicide is considered essential to enable access to appropriate mental health care and reduce stigma.

The rising incidence of suicide and its associated social and psychological impacts have been linked to socio-economic stressors, cultural misconceptions, and limited public investment in mental health. Advocacy, increased public awareness, and the establishment of social support systems have been identified as key strategies for address-

ing these challenges.

The group emphasised that a comprehensive, society-wide approach—engaging government, civil society, and community actors—is necessary to address the root causes of suicide and improve mental health outcomes across the country.



# FCT Authorities Clamp Down on Quack Medical Facilities as Minister Reaffirms Free Healthcare for Pregnant Women



The Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), has ordered a clampdown on illegal hospitals and unqualified medical personnel following the death of a pregnant woman during a caesarean section at a Hospital in Durumi, FCT. Investigations revealed the facility was unregistered and operated by individuals lacking the requisite medical qualifications.

In response, the Department of Medical and Diagnostic Services, in collaboration with the Private Health Establishments Registration and Monitoring Committee (PHERMC) and law enforcement, sealed the facility and commenced investigations.

The Minister has directed that all culprits involved in such unlawful medical practices be apprehended and prosecuted.

Significantly, the Minister emphasised that in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), vulnerable groups, particularly pregnant women, benefit from free enrollment into the FCT Health Insurance Scheme (FHIS). This enrollment enables them to access, at no cost, all services included in the Basic Minimum Package of Health Services (BMPHS) through the Primary Health Care (PHC) centres. Additionally, several hospitals in the FCT—specifically Gwarinpa, Nyanya, Abaji, and Kuje General Hospitals—have been designated as Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care (CEONC) centres. These facilities provide free cesarean section services.

This tragic incident highlights the dual imperative of regulatory enforcement and public education on the availability of free, safe, and accredited maternal healthcare services in the FCT.

# NHIA Orders HMOs to Approve Treatment Within One Hour

The National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) has directed all Health Maintenance Organisations (HMOs) to issue authorisation codes for treatment within one hour of receiving a request from healthcare providers. This directive, which took effect on April 1, 2025, is aimed at eliminating delays and ensuring prompt access to healthcare for enrollees.

Healthcare providers are required to submit authorisation requests immediately upon identifying the need for treatment. If an HMO fails to respond within one hour, providers are authorised to proceed with the treatment and must notify the NHIA accordingly. In emergency situations, treatment may commence without prior approval, but the authorisation code must be obtained within 48 hours.

The NHIA also mandates that HMOs communicate any delays in approval with clear justifications. All authorisation requests and responses must be properly documented. Enrollees are encouraged to

report any delays in accessing care due to HMO inaction directly to the NHIA.

Compliance checks carried out in public hospitals within the Federal Capital Territory have shown about 70% adherence to the directive. The NHIA has warned that non-compliant HMOs and providers will face sanctions and confirmed that enforcement activities will soon extend nationwide.



## HMO



# Nigerian Council of Food Science and Technology Launches Food Safety Operational Manual

The Nigerian Council of Food Science and Technology has launched a practical Food Safety Operational Manual aimed at empowering food safety officers to regulate, inspect, document, and guide food vendors in markets, street stalls, restaurants, bakeries, and more.

The manual specifically targets dangerous behaviors—such as using non-food-grade chemicals, poor refrigeration, and cross-contamination—and highlights the links between unsafe food and chronic diseases like kidney and liver failure, diabetes, cancer, and foodborne illness.

Local governments are encouraged to employ qualified, licensed food science professionals to enforce the manual's guidelines. In addition, the Federal Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology and the Ministry of Health will support its implementation through capacity-building, affordable technology, and mobile/digital education platforms, aligning



with international standards set by World Health Organisation (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and FAO's Codex.

This initiative marks a major stride in strengthening Nigeria's food safety framework, emphasising ongoing enforcement and professional oversight to protect citizens' health.



# Nigeria Launches National Guidelines to Reduce Maternal Deaths

To mark Safe Motherhood Day on April 11, 2025, the Federal Government of Nigeria launched six national policy documents aimed at reducing maternal and newborn deaths across the country. The documents were unveiled by the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Muhammad Pate.

The new policies include a national Safe Motherhood Strategy, clinical protocols for managing postpartum haemorrhage, pre-eclampsia and eclampsia, essential gynaecological skills manuals, a national strategy to improve the quality of reproductive and maternal care, and a training manual on managing obstetric fistula.

These guidelines are intended to standardise clinical care, improve service quality, and strengthen Nigeria's health system. With Nigeria accounting for about 20% of global maternal and child deaths, the initiative focuses on providing timely, evidence-based care to reduce preventable fatalities.



# **FG Rolls Out Free Obstetric Care and VVF Treatment**

The Federal Government has approved free treatment for women with obstetric complications in 154 health facilities and for those with vesicovaginal fistula (VVF) in 18 designated centres across the country. These services are provided at no cost to women experiencing complications during pregnancy, labour, or delivery.

The initiative specifically targets emergency obstetric cases, including VVF repairs, and marks a significant expansion of maternal healthcare access. Health facilities offering these services are distributed regionally to ensure broader coverage and equitable access for women across the country.

This policy highlights the government's ongoing efforts to reduce maternal morbidity and address obstetric complications through targeted, cost-free interventions in public health facilities.



# Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Abuja, Probes Eight Staff for Negligence



The Federal Medical Centre (FMC) in Abuja has launched an internal investigation into eight staff members—comprising four doctors, two nurses, and two attendants—after a viral video showed accident victims allegedly left untreated in the hospital's emergency unit. The footage, recorded by a concerned bystander who transported the victims to the facility, sparked national outrage.

The FMC confirmed that the individuals seen in the video, including one with a head injury, were eventually treated and discharged the same day. It was emphasised that any staff found guilty of neglect will be held accountable, and that the probe was ordered by the Federal Government through the Minister of State for Health, Dr. Iziq Salako.

The outcome of the investigation will be made public once concluded, and the hospital reaffirmed its commitment to transparency and accountability in patient care.