

GHANA ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENTISTS

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GAMLS RE-ITERATES THE NEED FOR AGGRESSIVE TESTING AND CASE DETECTION FOR COVID-19

The Ghana Association of Medical Laboratory Scientists (GAMLS) wishes to commend the government for responding positively to the call by the professional body to expand access to testing and planning to equip about 15 facilities to be able to test for COVID-19 in Ghana.

With the report of cases from community transmissions (cases detected among people without travelling history), it has become necessary to actively search for cases in areas with detected cases to facilitate directions on isolation, quarantine, management and possible gradual lock down.

We urge government to speed up the processes of acquiring the **mobile** suitcase based rapid molecular assay for COVID-19 and deploy to centres of interest. This is in line with the proposed logistics that the professional body sent to advise government to acquire. These mobile platforms provide the required biosafety conditions in places without biosafety cabinets to perform testing for SARS-COV-2 infections. This is the most cost effective way to get the planned 15 medical laboratory facilities to perform testing with the gold standard if not all regional hospitals and public health reference laboratories.

It is also welcoming to note that discussions to make available the logistics to perform testing in 127 health facilities in Ghana that already have GeneXperts currently being used for TB diagnosis. These GeneXpert machines are molecular-based diagnostic systems which produce results in 45 minutes with moderate biosafety requirements. The platform has approved express test cartridges for COVID-19 and are available to be procured and deployed across the country. This positive results from this express and reliable test will provide scientific basis for quarantining persons and initiating management of affected persons even if they prove to be asymptomatic. Real time patient detection and management using express testing is the way to go as advised by the World Health Organization (WHO). This diagnostic platform when successful could also support the existing ones at Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR), Kumasi Centre for Collaborative Research in Tropical Medicine (KCCR) and the expanded facilities that will be added as mentioned by government. The continuous reliance on the two research centres alone is too risky.

In line with the Public Health Act, 2012 (Act No. 851 of 2012), we wish the Ministry of Health/ Ghana Health Service and the regulatory authorities speed up the validation and registration of Rapid Diagnostic Test (RDT) kits in line with global acceptable standards to be deployed. The RDTs when available could be used in areas with detected cases by qualified and trained Medical Laboratory

Professionals in our communities to actively screen for cases and further referral for confirmation when indicative with the gold standard (molecular testing).

GAMLS wishes to assure the general public that Ghana has the human resources with the requisite expertise and competence to collect, package, transport and test samples for the diagnosis of COVID-19.

It is our hope that the MOH/GHS will provide adequate personal protective equipment (PPEs) to the personnel to perform their duties after the ongoing engagements and training of Medical Laboratory Professionals across the country.

The general public is advised to remain calm and follow the recommendations being provided by the Ministry of Health/ Ghana Health Services.

Signed



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GAMLS, PUBLIC RELATIONS
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