

Pathology and Laboratory Medicine (PaLM)  
training and practice in Nigeria  
- its current status, challenges,  
opportunities.

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# Nigeria - facts

- Located in West, sub-Saharan Africa
- Population 184 million (1/2 W/Africa; 1/6 of Africa)
- Multi-ethnic; divided into 36 states and 774 LG
- In Africa, biggest exporter of oil, largest natural gas reserve
- Low Middle Income Country GDP per capita - 1/5 S/Africa; 1/30 US
- HIV prevalence - 3.4% (over 6 million, 2<sup>nd</sup> to S/Africa), TB incidence 400/yr
- Hypertension 25 - 30%, Diabetes Mellitus 6% → CVD-related deaths
- Commonest cancers - Prostate and breast
- Life expectancy is 54 years



# Structure of PaLM training in Nigeria

2 postgraduate colleges - National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria (1979)  
- West African College of Physicians (1976)

Fellowships    1) Anatomic Pathology                      2) Chemical Pathology  
                    3) Medical Microbiology                      4) Hematology and Blood Transfusion

- 4 - 6 year programs in 2 parts

Part I - Acquire basic skills in all the 4 disciplines

Part II - Improve professional judgement and problem solving in one

- Examinations are conducted by the colleges 4 times a year
- Average annual training output 25 - 30;
- Currently about 250 Pathologists in Nigeria (~1 per million)

# Challenges for PaLM in Nigeria

## 1) PaLM is viewed/used as a purely technical service

- The role of Pathologists in ensuring a clinically effective service is undervalued.
- Significant potential for harm, waste of resources, and dislocation from analytical quality

## 2) Quality landscape: the few good, the frequent bad & the common ugly

- Only 4 laboratories are accredited; EQA in mostly ARV clinic associated labs
- No guarantee of analytical quality

## 3) Volume of testing done is low/Range of services limited

- Compared to HiC/UMiC, 8 - 12 % by hospital bed size
- Out of pocket payments, Health Insurance <5%, ??competency of trainees

## 4) Available equipment are not designed for the 'local environment'

- Technical support, reagent supply, temperature, power requirements

# Challenges/Opportunities for PaLM in Nigeria

## 5) Tiers of laboratory services are not functionally connected

- Vertical - No formal flow of information/services
- Horizontal - Operate in silos; no referral or shared services

## Opportunities

- Training programs that develop skills at the clinic-laboratory interface
- 'Encourage' participation in EQA by laboratories, link to insurance payments
- Advocacy for expanding insurance coverage of laboratory services
- Virtual repository of cases to deliver specific skills to aid trainee learning
- Encourage manufacture of IVD on the continent??
- Laboratory information systems to connect tiers