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Stakeholders Urge Reform of the Disability Commission

Stakeholders at the 2025 Disability Rights Advocacy Network Roundtable held recently in Lagos have called for a comprehensive overhaul of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD). Participants noted that the Commission, in its current form, lacks the structure, reach, and resources required to effectively enforce the rights of persons with disabilities in Nigeria.

Speakers at the roundtable stressed that although the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018 provides a strong legal framework, enforcement is still weak. They observed that persons with disabilities continue to face barriers in accessing public services, healthcare, education, and built environments due to inadequate implementation of disability laws.

Participants also highlighted the need for decentralising the Commission's operations, improving funding, and establishing more accessible offices at the state and local government levels.



Civil society groups and legal experts at the event emphasised that an empowered disability commission is essential to addressing discrimination and ensuring that persons with disabilities can fully enjoy their rights.

Strengthening the disability commission directly affects enforcement of healthcare access rights, protection against discrimination in medical settings, and compliance with standards ensuring safe, inclusive, and equitable health services for persons with disabilities.

Doctors Call for Anti-Discrimination Laws to Safeguard People with Diabetes

Medical experts and diabetes advocates in Nigeria have publicly called for anti-discrimination laws to protect people living with diabetes, especially in the workplace. At a World Diabetes Day webinar organised by the Nigerian

Society of Endocrinology and Metabolism, doctors highlighted widespread stigma and discrimination that many Nigerians with diabetes experience, including job loss and poor workplace support. They emphasised that Nigeria currently lacks specific legal protections against discrimination for workers with diabetes, unlike countries such as the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland that have robust anti-discrimination legislation for chronic health conditions.

Speakers noted that the absence of binding legal safeguards means many workers hide their condition, which can worsen health outcomes. They stressed the need for legal frameworks that explicitly prohibit discrimination,

increased public and employer awareness about diabetes, and workplace accommodations such as flexible schedules, breaks for blood sugar monitoring, and education for colleagues and managers.

Anti-discrimination protections influence access to healthcare, workplace health rights, and legal accountability for equitable treatment of people with chronic illnesses, ensuring their health needs are legally recognised and protected.



Senate Bill to Establish Sickle Cell Research Centres Scales Second Reading

The Nigerian Senate has taken a significant legislative step by passing for second reading a bill to establish Sickle Cell Disorder Research and Therapy

Centres across the six geopolitical zones and the Federal Capital Territory. The proposed law — the Sickle Cell Disorder Research and Therapy Centres

(Establishment) Bill, 2025 (SB.893), sponsored by Senator Sunday Marshall Katung (Kaduna South) — aims to create a legal framework for the administration of specialised centres focused on sickle cell diagnosis, treatment, research, education, and patient support.

Proponents of the bill emphasise that it will expand access to specialised care, enhance data collection on the disease, support families affected by sickle cell disorder, and strengthen public awareness and preventive education. If enacted, the legislation would provide for the creation of management boards, staffing structures, and funding



mechanisms for the centres.

This bill is remarkable because it establishes statutory authority for specialised healthcare infrastructure, reinforces legislative oversight of national health priorities, and strengthens legal support for equitable care and research for sickle cell disorder — a major public health concern in Nigeria.

Spinal Cord Injury Association Criticises Ogun Assembly's Proposed Disability Bill

The Spinal Cord Injury Association of Nigeria (SCIAN) has criticised the Ogun State House of Assembly's proposed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Bill, saying it fails to adequately address the specific rights and needs of persons with disabilities. SCIAN expressed reservations about the bill during a public hearing, arguing that disability

protections risk being diluted if merged broadly with other vulnerable groups instead of being covered under a dedicated disability law.

SCIAN representatives stressed that the DEI Bill — as currently drafted — prioritises general equity concerns but does not sufficiently safeguard the legal rights or promote the inclusion of people with disabilities, including those living with spinal cord injuries. They urged the legislature to prioritise amendments to the existing Ogun State Disability Law and to ensure the establishment of an independent disability commission with clear powers and enforcement mechanisms.

The association's position reflects broader disability community concerns that merging disability rights into a general DEI framework may weaken targeted legal protections and delay effective implementation of disability-specific policies.

This debate impacts medical and health law because effective disability legislation influences legal standards for healthcare access, rehabilitation services, anti-discrimination protections, and the enforcement of health-related rights for persons with disabilities.



House of Representatives Advances Bill to Regulate Production and Use of Herbal Medicines

Nigeria's House of Representatives has advanced a bill aimed at regulating the production, sale, and use of herbal medicines by amending the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) Act. The bill successfully scaled second reading, signalling legislative intent to expand NAFDAC's mandate to cover herbal medicine oversight.

Lawmakers behind the proposal contend that although herbal medicines — often referred to locally as "agbo" — are widely consumed across the country, existing laws do not clearly empower regulatory authorities to ensure their safety, quality, and efficacy.

Under the proposed legislation, NAFDAC's mandate would be expanded to cover herbal and traditional medicinal products. The bill also provides for the establishment of a Traditional Medicine Advisory Committee within NAFDAC to guide standardisation, documentation,

and safety of indigenous treatments. Additionally, it seeks to create a dedicated Department for Herbal Medicine Regulation to support ongoing oversight and enforcement of quality standards.

The draft law would introduce penalties for the production or sale of unregistered or unsafe herbal products, helping to protect consumers from health risks associated with unregulated remedies.

This legislative effort is significant because it defines legal authority over medicinal products, reinforces public safety standards, and integrates traditional medicinal practices into a regulated health framework, safeguarding patient health and consumer rights.



ACPN Opposes Proposed Establishment of New Health Commissions

The Association of Community Pharmacists of Nigeria (ACPN)

Pharmacists of Nigeria (ACPN) has publicly rejected moves by the National Assembly to create multiple new health commissions, warning that such proposals would deepen bureaucratic inefficiencies in

Nigeria's health sector. The association's position was released in a statement following public hearings at the House of Representatives on 18 November 2025 and the Senate on 24 November 2025.

ACPN criticised calls for a Surrogacy Commission, a National Accreditation and Standards Commission, a Tertiary Health Institutions Commission, and seven Sickle Cell Research and Therapy Centres across the six geopolitical zones and the Federal Capital Territory, describing them as legally unnecessary, economically unrealistic, and administratively wasteful.

The association noted that the National Health Act (NHA) 2014 already established the National Tertiary Health Institutions Standards Committee (NTHISC) with

lawful authority to regulate tertiary hospitals, accreditation processes, organ procurement and related standards — functions that some proposed bodies seek to duplicate.

ACPN argued that the core problem in the health sector is inadequate oversight and funding of existing statutory structures, not the creation of new commissions. It also highlighted underfunding of institutions like the Nigeria Institute of Pharmaceutical Research and Development (NIPRD) and the Nigeria Institute of Medical Research (NIIMR), urging lawmakers to prioritise realistic reforms.

ACPN's position offers a fresh perspective on the legislative attempt to create new health bodies. It underscores the need for stakeholders to critically evaluate proposed agencies to avoid regulatory conflicts, duplication of functions, and inefficiencies, ensuring that health law reforms strengthen rather than fragment Nigeria's healthcare regulatory framework.

ACPN Calls for Sanctions Over Illegal Drug Distribution in Federal Hospitals

The Association of Community Pharmacists of Nigeria (ACPN) has called on the Federal Government to sanction pharmaceutical companies and individuals

allegedly involved in illegal drug distribution practices within Federal Health Institutions (FHI) across the country. ACPN raised the alarm over what it described as a “persistent disregard for professional and legal standards” by some companies and their superintendent pharmacists operating unlawfully inside public hospitals, often with the tacit approval of hospital management and regulatory bodies.

The Association faulted the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) for failing to curb the activities of unregistered private pharmacy operators who have taken over drug distribution roles under questionable Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangements. The association cited multiple breaches of the Pharmacy Council of Nigeria (PCN) Act 2022, including requirements that only registered and inspected pharmacies may store, sell, or dispense medicines, and that private pharmacies are prohibited from operating inside public health facilities.

ACPN listed numerous affected institutions, urged superintendent pharmacists involved in these arrangements to regularise their operations by the end of 2025 or face sanctions, and said it would pursue wider penalties through regulatory authorities and relevant laws.

This issue highlights legal and regulatory gaps in pharmaceutical governance, emphasising the need for robust enforcement of drug distribution laws, protections against unregulated activities in public health facilities, and adherence to statutory standards to safeguard patient safety and integrity in healthcare delivery.



NAFDAC Secures Global Drug Regulation Milestone with Full ICH Membership

Nigeria's National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has achieved a major milestone by being admitted as a full member of the International Council for Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (ICH) — an exclusive global body that sets science-based standards for the development and regulation of medicines. The elevation from observer to full membership was formalised at the ICH Assembly meeting held in Singapore on 18–19 November 2025 and later announced by the council on 26 November 2025.

With this achievement, Nigeria joins about 25 national regulatory authorities worldwide committed to harmonised pharmaceutical guidelines, enabling NAFDAC to participate directly in the development and implementation of international standards. According to the agency, full ICH membership is expected to strengthen regulatory capacity, align Nigeria's medicines regulation with global best practices, and improve access to safe, high quality, and effective medicines



NAFDAC's advancement followed a multi-year process that included intensive capacity building, implementation of ICH guidelines, and participation in expert working groups — culminating in meeting the final membership requirements earlier in 2025.

This development is significant for medical and health law because full ICH membership brings Nigerian law and regulatory practice closer to internationally recognised scientific standards, influencing drug approval processes, safety monitoring, legal accountability, and harmonised regulatory frameworks that protect public health and patient rights.

Senate Approves Bill to Channel Excise Duty Toward Health Initiatives, Boosting Nigeria's Public Health System

Nigeria's Senate has passed a bill to amend the Customs, Excise Tariffs, Etc. (Consolidation) Act — proposing that part of the revenue from excise duty on non-alcoholic, carbonated, sugar-sweetened beverages be earmarked for health initiatives and public health infrastructure. The legislation was approved at second reading and referred to the Senate Committees on Finance; Customs, Excise and Tariffs; and Health (Secondary and Tertiary) for further scrutiny.

Proponents describe the bill as a public health investment strategy, noting that the current fixed ₦10 per litre excise duty has been eroded by inflation and is ineffective at curbing consumption of sugary drinks linked to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, obesity, hypertension, and cardiovascular conditions. The amendment would replace the fixed rate with a percentage-based levy tied to retail price, and a portion of the generated revenue would be legally designated for health promotion, disease prevention programmes, and health system strengthening.

Support from the Federal Ministry of Health and public health stakeholders at Senate hearings emphasised that directing excise revenue toward health funding aligns fiscal policy with national health priorities and could enhance preventive care efforts.

This initiative is significant because it creates a statutory mechanism linking tax policy with public health outcomes, potentially improving legal frameworks for sustainable health financing, preventive policy interventions, and accountability for health-related fiscal allocations in Nigeria's regulatory environment.



WHO Warns of Legal Gaps in AI Adoption Across Healthcare Systems

The World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe has warned that the rapid adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare is outpacing legal and regulatory frameworks needed to protect patients and health workers. AI is increasingly being used for disease detection, administrative tasks, and patient communication, reshaping care delivery, data interpretation, and resource allocation.

The warning comes from the first comprehensive WHO assessment of AI adoption and regulation across Europe, surveying 50 of 53 countries. While most countries recognise AI's potential for diagnostics, personalised medicine, and disease surveillance, only four have a dedicated national AI strategy, with seven more in development. Some nations, such as Estonia and Finland, have begun linking health data to AI platforms and investing in AI training for health

workers, while Spain is piloting AI for early disease detection in primary care.

However, legal uncertainty and financial constraints remain major barriers. 86% of surveyed countries cited legal ambiguity as a top concern, and less than 10% have established liability standards for AI in healthcare, essential for determining responsibility when AI systems err. WHO emphasised the need for clear liability rules, transparency, and verifiability to build trust in AI-driven outcomes.

This report underscores the urgent need for legal and ethical frameworks governing AI in healthcare, including liability, data governance, and patient safety safeguards. Effective regulation will ensure AI adoption empowers patients and health workers rather than creating new risks or inequities in care delivery.



Lagos State Moves to Establish New Agency to Regulate Private Hospitals and Clinics

Lagos State is taking steps toward establishing a dedicated agency to regulate private hospitals, clinics, and related healthcare facilities, following increasing concerns over the quality of care and professional standards in the private health sector. The proposed agency is expected to strengthen oversight, enforce compliance with medical regulations, and ensure that private health providers operate within approved ethical and professional frameworks.

According to the state legislature, the move is driven by recurring reports of inadequate medical management and the need for more coordinated supervision of private healthcare establishments. The planned agency would be responsible for licensing, monitoring, and enforcing standards across all private medical facilities, while helping to curb unprofessional practices and improve patient safety.

This initiative is significant because it reinforces patient protection, promotes regulatory compliance, curbs malpractice, and strengthens the legal framework



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