

# SOLACE



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF NIGERIAN SOCIETY OF SUBSTANCE USE  
PREVENTION AND TREATMENT PROFESSIONALS

Vol. 13/2023

## 5TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE / AGM

THEME

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ADDICTION  
SCIENCE COURSES IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY  
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: PROSPECTS  
AND CHALLENGES

 REIZ CONTINENTAL HOTEL, ABUJA

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## **BRIDGING THE GAP: ADDICTION SCIENCE IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY EDUCATION AND COLLABORATIVE DRUG CONTROL EFFORTS**

We are thrilled to present the 13th edition of the ISSUP Nigeria Newsletter, SOLACE, a testament to our steadfast commitment to advancing evidence-based approaches to addressing substance use prevention, treatment, recovery and policy development in Nigeria. This edition encapsulates the insights and highlights from our 5th national conference held in Abuja on October 24, 2023.

### **CONFERENCE RECAP**

**T**he 5th National Conference/Annual General Meeting of the Nigerian Society of Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Professionals (ISSUP Nigeria Chapter) held in Abuja marked a pivotal milestone in the pursuit of evidence-based strategies



*Dr. Martin O. Agwogie, National President, ISSUP Nigeria Chapter*

for substance use prevention, treatment, recovery and policy development in Nigeria. The conference with the theme “The Implementation of Addiction Science Courses in Nigerian Tertiary Educational Institutions: Prospects and Challenges” brought together stakeholders in the field of drug control in Nigeria, local and international partners.

Dr. Martin O. Agwogie, the National President of ISSUP Nigeria Chapter, in his welcome address highlighted the urgent need for universities to establish addiction-related programmes as he underscored ISSUP Nigeria's unwavering commitment to collaboration among stakeholders in drug control.

Recognizing the efficacy of collective endeavours, Dr. Agwogie emphasized that effective drug control strategies necessitate cohesive efforts from various sectors. The spotlight on introducing addiction studies in higher institutions of learning highlighted ISSUP Nigeria's dedication to shaping the trajectory of drug demand reduction in Nigeria. In his words “Today we have policy makers, representatives of academic institutions and other stakeholders in Nigeria to brainstorm on the way forward as part of efforts towards the development of evidence-based drug control strategies in Nigeria. We strongly believe that this is the future of drug demand reduction in Nigeria and one of the strategies through which our higher institutions of learning can meet the needs of society”.

## Critical need for addiction science programmes in academic institutions - Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (Retd)

**B**rig. Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa, Chairman/Chief Executive Officer of the NDLEA and Special Guest of Honour, stressed the critical need for academic institutions to integrate addiction science courses into their programmes. Gen. Marwa underscored the importance of training academics in addiction-related fields to equip professionals with the necessary skills for effective interventions towards addressing the drug epidemic. His speech focused on the pivotal role educational institutions play in combating substance abuse and the importance of standardized education to address this pressing societal issue. In his words “the introduction of addiction science in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria will promote the delivering of evidence-based substance use prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and care. This will pave the way for innovative research, policy formulation, community engagement and strengthen the capacity to address the complex drug abuse challenges in Nigeria.”

He therefore, called for collaboration, partnership and strategic planning towards achieving this laudable objective. Speaking further, he said “We must furthermore constantly update our curriculum with the evolving landscape of substance use to incorporate the latest research findings and evidence-based practices. Therefore, we must create spaces that encourage the students to explore, question and innovate ideals, method and techniques.”



*Brig. Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (Retd),  
CON, Special Guest of Honour*

Gen. Marwa noted that the government of Nigeria has been deeply concerned about the magnitude and the rising trend of demand for drugs recognizing the links between the use of drugs and organized criminal activities like murder, rape, armed robbery, kidnapping, banditry, terrorism etc. Thus, called on everyone to embrace this opportunity to sow the seed of knowledge, compassion and progress for a future where substance use disorders are met with empathy, where prevention and treatment are rooted in every end and where every

individual has the chance to live a fulfilled life, free from the shackle of drug abuse. He referred to the vision of ISSUP in promoting the development of addiction programmes as embarking on a transformative journey that can redefine how the nation perceives, understands and ultimately tackles substance use disorders.

**Empowering Addiction Science: Insights by Prof. Moses Audu**

In his paper presentation, Professor Moses Audu, a Consultant Psychiatrist at the University of Jos and keynote speaker, comprehensively delved into the evolution and significance of addiction science within Nigerian tertiary education. He passionately advocated for comprehensive education at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, stressing the crucial role education plays in addressing substance use challenges. Professor Audu emphasized the multidisciplinary nature of addictology, advocating for its expansion beyond traditional fields like Medicine, Psychology, and Sociology. His insights highlighted the urgency for Addiction Science programmes, aligning with efforts to combat Nigeria's high prevalence of drug use. He discussed the development of a standardized curriculum aimed at professionalizing addiction studies in Nigeria. His lecture focused on the crucial role of academia in addressing addiction and the necessity of specialized education to combat this societal challenge while commending some national and international organisations for their roles in improving the capacity of addiction workforce in Nigeria in the last few years.



*Prof. Moses D. Audu, Keynote Speaker*

**Addressing Global Substance Addiction Challenges: A Focus on Tertiary Education**

**Dr. Kevin Mulvey, ICUDDR**

In his presentation, Dr. Kevin Mulvey, Executive Director of the International Consortium of Universities for Drug Demand Reduction (ICUDDR), highlighted critical global issues surrounding substance addiction, particularly within tertiary institutions. He emphasized the need to develop professionals in drug demand reduction and

the persistent challenges faced worldwide.

Dr. Mulvey outlined four key prospects:

1. **Specialized Education:** Implementing dedicated courses in addiction studies to equip students with comprehensive knowledge in addressing addiction-related issues.
2. **Research and Innovation:** Engaging students in research related to drug demand reduction to contribute to evidence-based policies and strategies.
3. **Interdisciplinary Approach:** Involving diverse university departments to provide varied perspectives crucial for handling complex addiction issues.
4. **Community Engagement:** Collaborating with local communities to offer practical experiences in reducing drug demand.



Dr. Kevin Mulvey, ICUDDR

However, he noted specific challenges:

1. **Resource Constraints:** Limited funding hindering the development and sustenance of robust addiction studies programmes;
2. **Resistance to Dialogue:** Academic reluctance in openly discussing substance use, a critical barrier to progress and
3. **Curriculum Integration:** Challenges in integrating drug demand reduction into existing subjects.

To address these hurdles, Dr. Mulvey proposed solutions:

1. **Resource Mobilization:** Exploring partnerships, seeking governmental funding, and encouraging public contributions to support addiction studies programmes.
2. **Curriculum Review and Development:** Integrating existing material on prevention, treatment, and recovery support into educational programmes.
3. **Professional Development:** Providing faculty opportunities for continuous training in addiction studies.

In conclusion, Dr. Mulvey emphasized that empowering professionals and addressing these challenges can lead to evidence-based policies and collaboration among educated experts to combat substance addiction on a national and global scale.

## Addressing Critical Issues -ECOWAS

**M**r. Daniel Amankwaah's virtual address delivered on behalf of the Commissioner Human Development and Social Affairs ECOWAS Commission, Prof. Fatou Sarr, underscored the critical issue of drug abuse in West Africa, particularly Nigeria. Highlighting the limited number of universities that have introduced addiction courses in Africa,



Mr. Daniel Amankwaah, ECOWAS

Mr. Amankwaah emphasized the urgent need for concerted efforts to combat drug-related challenges. He noted that ISSUP Nigeria's initiative aims to bridge this gap by organizing annual conferences and training programmes tailored for professionals involved in drug prevention and treatment.

He highlighted efforts by the ECOWAS commission to support the capacity of the addiction workforce through the UPC and UTC trainings among others. Also

supporting member states in providing treatment facilities to enhance delivering of quality health care services among people with drug use disorders. In particular, he pointed out the importance of research and data gathering for which ECOWAS has made significant strides in publishing the WENDU report and called on ISSUP professionals to share its expertise in this regard. He concluded with words of commendation for ISSUP Nigeria Chapter for remaining consistent in its contributions to the national and global drug control efforts.

## Role of Research in National Strategies - UNODC

**A**s the representative of the UNODC country Rep, Dr. Ibanga Akanidomo underscored the pivotal role of researchers in shaping the country's response to the prevailing drug epidemic. Dr. Akanidomo emphasized the importance of understanding how research



Dr. Ibanga Akanidomo, UNODC

influences national strategies in combating substance abuse. He stressed the significance of training academics in addiction-related fields, highlighting the need to equip professionals with the skills required for effective interventions, reduction of stigma, and the promotion of evidence-based practices in prevention and treatment. Dr. Akanidomo's speech emphasized the critical link between research, education, and effective responses to substance abuse issues in the country.

**NOTABLE SPEECHES**

**Mr. Walter Quintanilla, INL**

In his remarks, the INL representative at the event, Mr. Walter Quintanilla commended the leadership of ISSUP Nigeria Chapter for remaining consistent in its effort towards addressing the issues of drugs and substance abuse in Nigeria through various activities, including the annual conference. He also commended ISSUP for the large turnout at the conference and for its

collaborative strategies among stakeholders in drug control in Nigeria. He noted that INL is pleased to collaborate and support ISSUP Nigeria.

**Mrs. Rita Okonjo, National Universities Commission (NUC)**

In his remarks the Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission (NUC), Mr. Chris Maiyaki who was represented by the Director, Directorate of Students Support Services, Mrs. Rita Okonjo said the commission has introduced a Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) to replace the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS), to ensure that the curriculum in universities reflects local and international innovation to meet present realities in the society. He expressed NUC commitment to the review in university academic programmes towards addressing society's challenges and noted that the introduction of addiction studies in universities in Nigeria is



Mr. Walter Quintanilla, INL



Mrs. Rita Okonjo, NUC



one of the ways of meeting societal needs considering the consequences of drug abuse. The NUC boss disclosed that the commission is about to review its statement on students support services to curb drug abuse among students. In conclusion, he noted that the conference was a wake-up call for relevant stakeholders to collaborate in dealing with the issue of drug addiction in Nigeria

### **Continental Commitment and Support**

**T**he African Union Commission's solidarity message which was presented through a letter signed by Mrs. Angela Martins, Director of Social Development, Culture, and Sports, underscored the continent's dedication to combating substance use challenges among African youth. Mrs. Martins enlisted some of the roles of the commission which includes the development of overarching continental policies and frameworks and to facilitate domestication and implementation by Member States. Acknowledging Nigeria's efforts in implementing recommendations, she commended the efforts of ISSUP Nigeria Chapter. In her words “The Continental Drug Action Plan specifically recommends the participation of Member States in the International Society for Substance Use Professionals (ISSUP) training to increase numbers of trained and credentialed prevention and treatment professionals. In this regard, Nigeria has been a trailblazer on the continent.” Further in her message, she said “Since your inception, the Commission has been keenly following your programmes and we are gratified by the significant milestones achieved.”

This year’s theme on the “Implementation of Addiction Science Courses in Nigerian Tertiary Educational Institutions: Prospects and Challenges” could not have come at a better time given the number of young people on the continent who are facing challenges with substance use and related mental health disorders. We encourage professionals in other Member States to summon the spirit of courage and responsibility which ISSUP Nigeria has shown”.

The Director noted that it is time to collectively implement evidence-based interventions as she called on everyone to look forward to the hosting of a high-level session on addressing substance use and related mental health disorders among youth, women and children in Lusaka, Zambia and as the commission counts on important input of experts as it begins the processes of crafting the next continental action plan

### **Livia Edegger, Deputy Director ISSUP Global**

In her virtual address at the conference, Livia Edegger, the Deputy Director of ISSUP Global, extended a gracious welcome to the esteemed attendees, expressing gratitude and acknowledging the organization's global impact in drug prevention, treatment, and recovery. She emphasized the pivotal role of the US Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs in shaping ISSUP and highlighted Nigeria's remarkable progress, boasting a membership of over 2000,

positioning it as the organization's second-largest chapter worldwide.

Livia praised Dr. Martin Agwogie and state coordinators of ISSUP Nigeria Chapter for their collaborative efforts in nurturing the Nigerian Chapter's success. Encouraging active participation, she invited individuals to engage via the website and anticipate in the forthcoming conference in Thessaloniki, Greece, slated for June, 2024.

Expressing enthusiasm for this year's focus on integrating addiction science into academic institutions, Livia highlighted the



promising partnership between ISSUP Nigeria, ICUDDR, and universities. She concluded by extending her best wishes for an informative and enriching conference, hoping it would facilitate new connections and foster knowledge exchange in the field of addiction science and treatment.

### **Progress and Collaborative Endeavours**

Efforts in curriculum development and program accreditation at undergraduate and postgraduate levels showcased significant strides made by institutions such as the Nnamdi Azikiwe University and the Niger Delta University with many others awaiting approval to commence addiction-related programmes. Collaboration among universities, regulatory bodies, and international organizations (UNODC, INL, Colombo Plan DAP, GISA, ICUDDR, ISSUP, and NDLEA) played a pivotal role in shaping these pioneering programmes.

In essence, the conference emphasized multidisciplinary collaborations, showcased progress in implementing Addiction Science courses, acknowledged prevailing challenges, and garnered robust support from the drug demand reduction stakeholders. This collective effort aims to advance evidence-based interventions, shape policies, and address substance use challenges, not only in Nigeria but also across the African continent.



Olori Lydia Adja Ajayi presenting AUC solidarity message

The panel xrayed the prospects and challenges of the introduction of addition science programmes in higher institutions of learning. The experts unanimously agreed that even



though the challenges are enormous due to several factors which were well articulated by the various speakers, they strongly believed that the challenges can be surmounted through advocacy and collaboration. They suggested that identification of job placements and



prospects after the programme will encourage students' enrolment and address the fear of investing in such programme. The paneslists also called for scholarship scheme to encourage enrolment, especially at this early stage of the programme in Nigeria. The presence

of the NUC on the panel was also heart warming as it provided guidance for formal accreditation of addiction science courses in the universities. The panel comprises of Prof. Michael Ezenwa, Nnamdi Azikiwe University; Prof. Ibaba Samuel Ibaba, Niger Delta University; Dr. Auwalu S. Salihu, MD Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital Dawanau and Mrs. Rita Okonjo, National Universities Commission. The moderators were Prof. Suwa G. Goar and Ms. Fatima A. Popoola.

### **Honouring Visionary Leadership**

In a significant gesture, ISSUP Nigeria honoured Brig. Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (Retd), CON, Chairman/Chief Executive Officer of the NDLEA, as "The bridge builder for effective drug control in Nigeria". Gen. Marwa's visionary leadership and collaborative approach significantly elevated drug control efforts in the nation. Notably, initiatives like the Special Purpose Committee (SPC) exemplified his commitment to pioneering strategies for substance use prevention, treatment and recovery.



Gen. Mohamed B. Marwa receiving his award

# APPRECIATION FOR OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE AND SUPPORT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISSUP NIGERIA CHAPTER





Rewarding best performing state coordinators for 2023, Lagos and Cross River State Coordinators



Gen. Marwa and Dr. Agwojie



Dr. Ibanga Akanidomo, UNODC and Walter Quintanilla, INL

# PHOTO SESSION



Mr. David Folaranmi and Princess Ekwi Ajide, the Mcs





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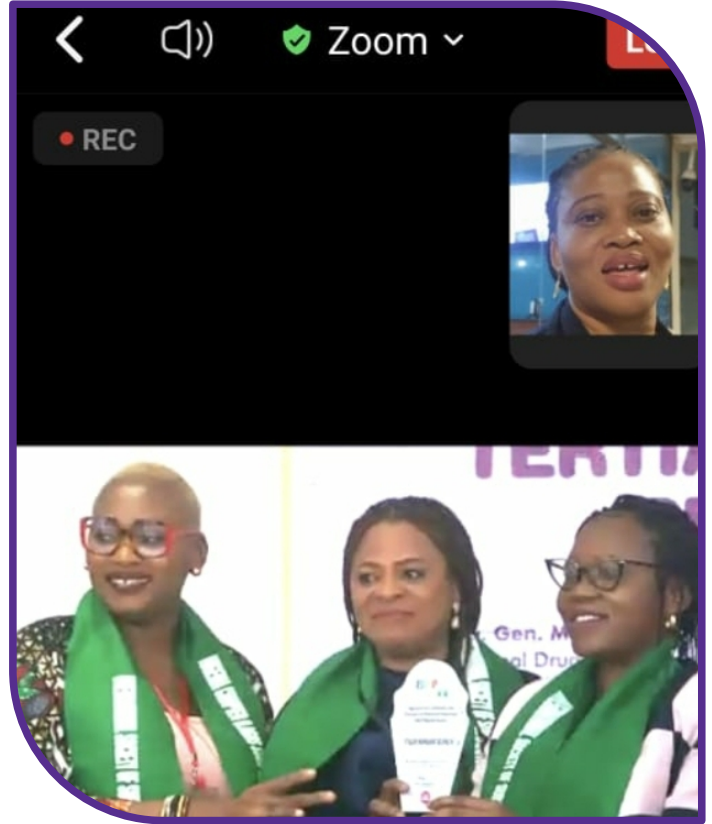
*Season's Greetings* 

From all of us at  
ISSUP Nigeria Chapter

# PHOTO SESSION



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