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PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY THE GHANA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION ON THE OUTBREAK OF LASSA FEVER IN GHANA

The Ghana Medical Association (GMA) has noted with concern the first reported case of Lassa Fever in Ghana, at the Tema General Hospital which unfortunately resulted in the death of the affected person.

We express our condolences to the bereaved family and pray for them.

The GMA commends the professionalism exhibited by its members and other health workers at the Tema General Hospital as well as the Public Health division of the Ghana Health Service during this incident.

Following extensive deliberation on the case management and the state of preparedness of the nation for such emergencies, the GMA wishes to state the following

1. High alert for Lassa Fever outbreak

The GMA calls on all its members, other health professionals, and the entire general public that the nation is still on a very high alert for an epidemic and we must not go to sleep. All frontline health workers are to familiarize themselves with the case definition, signs and symptoms, and available management protocols of Lassa Fever. Standard infection prevention and control protocols should be adhered to strictly at all times. Constant education of the general public should be continued to ensure that people with related symptoms report promptly at health facilities.

2. Systems for the management of public emergencies

The GMA calls for an effective and well-coordinated system for the management of public health emergencies. In particular, we request the re-activation of the dormant Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) that is led and managed by technical health personnel with the requisite expertise and experience.

We further request that the infrastructure and logistics needed to manage such public health emergencies should be provided for by the government to all relevant agencies. We continue to recommend the setting up of infectious disease centres of excellence for the purposes of research, training and case management.

The government should as a matter of urgency procure the antiviral medication needed to manage the Lassa Fever cases and provide more Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) for frontline providers of care.

3. Compensation and motivation for frontline health workers

There is the need to provide adequate compensation package and motivation for frontline health workers who may become victims of such highly fatal conditions in their line of duty. The compensation package proposed by the GMA and accepted by the Ministry of Health and other labour unions in the health sector during the Ebola pandemic should be reviewed for possible adoption.

4. Consolidating the gains made in the wake of the last Ebola outbreak in the sub-region

We call on all stakeholders especially the government to build on the expertise acquired and infrastructure gains made by the country during the last Ebola outbreak in some neighbouring countries in the sub-region and not allow all that to go down the drain. The **Rapid Response Teams** that were set up at the time should be activated and adequately resourced to perform their roles.



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Dr. Frank Ankobea, Esq
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