

SOLACE



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

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In this edition, SOLACE brings you interviews from professionals in the field of substance use prevention, treatment and recovery who are also holding key positions in this field in Nigeria; Prof. Michael Ezenwa and Prof. Ronke Grace Awopetu. Enjoy it!



PROF. MICHAEL EZENWA

SOLACE: Can we meet you?

ME: My name is Michael Ezenwa. I am a professor of Clinical Psychology and an Addiction Science Professional. I currently serve as the programme liaison for Addiction Intervention and Employee Assistance Programme in the department of psychology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra state, Nigeria. An executive member of ISSUP Nigeria, the zonal coordinator for ISSUP South East, Nigeria. I also serve as the country coordinator of the International Consortium of Universities for Drug Demand Reduction (ICUDDR). At the professional level, I am a fellow of the Nigerian Association of Clinical Psychologists, fellow and the Immediate Past President of Nigerian Psychological Association.

SOLACE: Since when have you been involved in the activities of ICUDDR?

ME: My contact with ICUDDR dates back to 2018 during the 4th Global Conference of the International Society of Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Professionals (ISSUP) in Nairobi, Kenya. Among the many activities that took place at the conference was a side event organised by ICUDDR with delegates from different countries in Africa. Dr. Kimberly Johnson coordinated the session with assistance from Cary Hopkins. The team from Nigeria led by Dr Martin Agwogie included Prof. Michael Ezenwa, Prof. Bola Ola, Prof. Moses Audu, Prof. Gboyega Emmanuel Abikoye among others. The team leader led the presentations on the stage/development of addiction workforce in Nigeria and the way forward. The experience was eye-opening with great opportunities and collaboration for the development of addiction studies in universities.

SOLACE: How have you been able to key into these opportunities?

ME. On my return to them country, I informed my university on the outcome of the conference.

Since then, it has been one activity or another in the university in an effort to carry my colleagues along on the importance of

Addiction Science education to support the manpower of first, the various public institutions that work in the relevant drug use prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and policy development with evidence-based practices to enhance the efficiency of their services. In this direction, I tried through different fora to sensitise the university community, starting with our staff at the department of psychology. Interest groups naturally formed themselves in terms of those who were very keen to explore the new idea that came in, also given that in that 2018, the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime Nigeria office published the first comprehensive national household survey on drug use that showed that Nigeria had a drug use prevalence rate of 14.3%. It would appear that this information helped to showcase the need to think of newer and perhaps more efficient ways to arrest the situation.

On the other hand, I severally added my voice on the floor of the University Senate on the need to review the university policy document with respect to students' involvement in drug use, especially illicit drugs and controlled medications. In fact, prior to this time, once there were proven cases of illicit drug use and handling such as cannabis sativa, amongst others, the punishment could be as serious as expulsion. With time, I with the support of other senators, convinced the Senate of Nnamdi Azikiwe University to review the

forementioned policy in favour of referring such students for rehabilitation while the student status remains valid. With strong presentations, the Senate was convinced and appointed a committee to review the students' handbook. I am happy to say that the situation today is different. I thank our current Vice Chancellor, Professor Charles Esimone (FAS), for this achievement and all members of the Senate of Nnamdi Azikiwe University.

In addition, our university in the last three years has celebrated the world drug day. An occasion to call attention to the impact of illicit drugs and the need for everyone to take prevention measures seriously and promote rehabilitation for those already in use. Attention is also drawn on the need to stop discrimination against persons who use drugs. The entire university community is usually invited alongside external persons with the Vice Chancellor or his representative in attendance. During these years, ISSUP SouthEast under my leadership has collaborated alongside Anambra State Command of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency with the university in the celebration.

We have also raised awareness on drug related issues in the entire university. We consider this remarkable given the dramatic improvement in information and attitude among colleagues, students and in research.

SOLACE: Besides that, what else have you been able to achieve?

ME: We have also successfully secured approval for a Master of Science degree in Addiction Intervention currently running in our university. This was not an easy process, but it is up and running NOW. More importantly, the programme is now being transformed into three modules of delivery, namely face to face, hybrid, and completely online. This will make it possible for students to choose what is most convenient for them, especially those who need the education but do not have the logistic convenience to be physically present in the university to acquire the knowledge. Since 2021, I have served as the pioneer coordinator/ programme liaison of Addiction Intervention. This is not an easy task given that it is a completely new programme in different respects. However, there have been great moments of joy.

Only recently (February 2023), our university received a request for our Addiction Intervention curriculum from one of the foreign diplomatic missions in Nigeria for replication in her home country. We felt this was one important landmark to indicate the value of the work we do. In our reply to the embassy, we indicated our willingness to support the country further in setting up her training programme in addiction intervention. The University Senate during its session on 31st March, made a special recognition of my efforts in the area of Addiction science in the university.

SOLACE: What does this mean to you as the national coordinator of ICUDDR in Nigeria?

ME: With my appointment as the country's coordinator of ICUDDR, I believe it simply translates to working in the same direction but now with people from other parts of the country, especially other universities. In my address earlier this year to our members in Nigeria, I have requested for cooperation, new ideas on how best to build on the foundation laid by Prof Bola Ola, the index national coordinator with myself as his assistant. I drew attention to the following questions: How do we move closer to achieving the ICUDDR mission in Nigeria? In addition, when do we engage, given the challenges of no funds and limited logistic support, how do we create time from our busy schedules for ICUDDR activities, among other things?

From the responses to my address, some progress is being recorded. We have agreed to meet virtually once every quarter which we started last month (March). We have set measurable targets for ourselves to be reviewed periodically. With the necessary support and cooperation, it is my hope that we shall also explore the possibility of embarking on some relevant research activities to answer important questions in our immediate environment and contribute to new evidence in solving new challenges.

SOLACE: What is your advice to colleagues in universities in Nigeria and other countries who are looking forward to establishing addiction programmes in their universities?

ME: My advice is simple, first is to educate yourself sufficiently in the area of substance use and related issues. Ensure that you are convinced in what you want to do and have some intrinsic motivation. Be a team leader in carrying your colleagues along in the assignment you have set out with them. Check well what your system needs and be sure of what you want to do. As an individual, I also derive strength from calm, quiet prayer, especially when the task looks overwhelming.

SOLACE: What is your vision for ICUDDR in Nigeria in the next five years?

ME: I believe that training in manpower development will advance in Nigeria and the entire sub region in the next five years, all things being equal. What happens in Nigeria has a way of snowballing into other parts of the region in Africa. Already, one of the neighbouring countries to Nigeria has requested our addiction intervention curriculum for use in her country. I expect more of similar developments.

I also expect more applications of evidence-based practices in the area of substance use disorder administration in Nigeria, given expected more trained personnel in evidence-

based practices and theories.

SOLACE: What kind of support from local and International partners do you need to achieve this vision?

ME: One important area of support is in the area of finance. There is a need for people to work together and meet to review plans from time to time. This requires money. Research is an important component of our business as addiction professionals. This also needs funding. There is a great need to have a coordinating office for the activities of ICUDDR in Nigeria. Without coordination, real progress cannot be measured. We need data both for local use and for reporting to ICUDDR offices in Africa and international partners. Besides, we need to develop programmes to monitor the progress of people we have trained in addiction intervention to assess if our programme is making the expected impact or need improvement. Regular interface with industry is important to remain relevant to those that need our services. All these are major items of expenditure that require funding.

SOLACE: Any parting words?

ME: Looking forward, the task is huge, but we shall be simple, cumulative, and coordinated about it.



PROF. RONKE GRACE AWOPETU

SOLACE: Can we meet you?

RGA: I am Professor Ronke Grace Awopetu. I started my higher education from University of Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti state where I obtained Bachelor's degree (B.Sc. Hons) in Psychology. From there I moved to University of Ibadan, Oyo state where I bagged Master of Science (M.Sc.) degree in Clinical Psychology and a PhD in Clinical Psychology from Benue State University, Makurdi, Benue state. I also obtained a Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE). I am a registered member and Fellow of both the Nigerian Psychological Association (FNPA) and Nigerian Association of Clinical Psychologists (FNACP) and a Member, Executive Leadership and Management Professional (MELMP). I work with the Air Force Institute of Technology, Department General Studies Kaduna, Kaduna state as a Clinical Psychologist. I have undergone several trainings in my discipline that enabled me to be highly skilled and dedicated with demonstrated success in providing

exceptional care and interventions for internally displaced persons, prison population, traumatized individuals and persons who use drugs.

I am a compassionate professional with expertise in psychological assessment, effective communication, building client relationships and maintaining confidentiality. My track record of successes working with diverse population on one-on-one and group settings is evidenced in my research and publications nationally and internationally. Effective motivator and advocate with inherent ability to manage many types of human personalities, diffuse stressful situations, proactively resolve issues and achieve challenging goals. Exemplary leadership skill as proven by successful staff development and group facilitation. A master trainer of Comprehensive Community Mental Health (CCMH) and a trainer in Suicide: Effective Risk Assessment and Intervention from California Psychological Association (CPA) and I am the state coordinator of ISSUP in Kaduna State.

My areas of interest include teaching, mentoring, psychological assessment, stress management, crisis intervention, trauma and depression, substance abuse, suicide prevention, assessment and management; guidance and emotional support.

SOLACE: You seem to be passionate about drug demand reduction, can you share this with us?

RGA: Drug demand reduction is a policy developed as a result of devastating effects of drug use, abuse and trafficking which has affected all nations of the world. The adverse effects on health, renewed crime rates, violence and corruption, the draining of human, natural and financial resources that might otherwise be used for social and economic development; the destruction of individuals, families and communities; and the undermining of political, cultural, social and economic structures. A rapidly changing social and economic climate, coupled with increased availability and promotion of drugs and the demand for them, have contributed to the increasing magnitude of the global drug abuse problem.

The complexity of the problem has been compounded by changing patterns of drug abuse, supply and distribution. There has been an increase in social and economic factors which make people, especially youth, more vulnerable and likely to engage in drug use and drug-related risk-taking behaviour. Therefore, my passion for DDR is to see how we can collectively as professionals in the field of drugs and substance abuse management efficiently address all the aforementioned problems and develop inclusive programmes that will target all sectors of

society at large.

SOLACE: What is your vision for ISSUP Kaduna State Branch?

RGA: My vision for ISSUP, Kaduna State branch, is to build a robust team of professionals that will network with stakeholders in the areas of substance use prevention, treatment and recovery in the state. Conduct evidence-based research that will be globally feasible.

SOLACE: How do you intend to achieve your vision?

RGA: This would be achieved through collective responsibility of our members, relevant stakeholders (community leaders, parents, youths and other agencies or organizations) by designing programmes/trainings that are tailored toward substance use prevention, treatment and recovery.

SOLACE: Any other thing you would like to say?

RGA: I wish to make ISSUP Kaduna State branch to be more viable. I also want to increase our activities at community level.

In continuation of ISSUP Nigeria Chapter bi-monthly webinar, three webinars were held recently.



DR KEHINDE ODERINDE

Topic: Substance Use Disorders (SUDs) in Schizophrenia: Current Approach to Management

Highlights from the presentation

- Learnt about factors influencing substance use disorders (SUDs) in Schizophrenia
- Learnt about the theories in the cooccurrence of SUDs and schizophrenia
- Unravalled the link between SUDs and schizophrenia
- Gained better understanding of how to manage co-occurring SUDs in schizophrenia



Topic: Substance Use Prevention Interventions in Schools: Alternatives to Punishment

Highlights from the presentation

- Got acquainted with the components of a comprehensive school-based substance use prevention intervention
- Learnt about the importance of substance use prevention policy
- Learnt about the implementation of prevention interventions in the school setting
- Learnt how to address infractions of substance use policies with positive sanctions: Alternatives to Punishment



MARIA MFON ILUGBUHI



DR SA'ADATU ADAMU

Topic: Mental health and substance abuse

Highlights from the presentation

- Learnt about the concept of mental health
- Had better understanding of the importance of mental health and biopsychosocial model of mental health
- Gained better understanding of mental health treatments and service support
- Learnt about dual diagnosis, common dual diagnosis and the connection between mental disorders and substance abuse
- Learnt about risk factors to substance abuse and mental disorders
- Learnt about preventive measures and way forward

ISSUP Nigeria Chapter is collaborating with ISSUP South Africa, ISSUP Kenya and ISSUP UK to organise webinar series with a focus on stigma and substance use with the aim of reducing stigma associated with alcohol and other substance use. ISSUP Nigeria Chapter will be hosting the next webinar series.

Topic: Stigma, Family and Community

Date: Tuesday 25th May, 2022

Time: 3PM WAT

SPEAKERS



DR. NDIDI OFOLE

Dr. Ofole is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Counselling and Human Development Studies, University of Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria. Ndidi has a doctorate in Counselling Psychology from the University of Ibadan. She specializes in mental health among diverse populations. She is also an expert in health promotion and has worked extensively with adolescents and young people in substance use prevention. Dr. Ofole is the coordinator of the stigma webinar series for ISSUP Nigeria Chapter.

Peter works with the Federal Neuro Psychiatric Hospital Yaba, Lagos state, Nigeria. He is a certified addiction professional (ICAP), a National Trainer and a Training Provider for Colombo Plan under the SOUND MIND INITIATIVE. Peter has presented in many National and Global Conferences. He is an Executive member of ISSUP Nigeria Chapter and has served in many National and International Committees.



PETER ADENIBUKAN ADENIBUYAN, ICAP

To register, [Click here](#)

CONGRATULATIONS



Dr. Auwal Sani Salihu, the Zonal Coordinator of ISSUP Nigeria Chapter, North West Zone appointed as the Medical Director of Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Dawanau, Kano State. Congratulations!!!

APPOINTMENTS

Congratulations to colleagues who have been appointed as State Coordinators of ISSUP Nigeria Chapter



Olori Lydia Adza Ajayi
Ekiti State Coordinator



Dr Nwoga Charles Nnaemeka
Plateau State Coordinator



Dr. Anyalewa Alan-Ajonye
Benue State Coordinator



Dr. Azu Kalu Oko (Rev)
Abia State Coordinator



Dr. Cynthia N. C. Udeze
Anambra State Coordinator

UPCOMING EVENTS/TRAININGS AND CONFERENCES

CONFERENCE

ISSUP Nigeria Chapter Annual Conference/General Meeting

Date: October 2023

Exact date and venue to be announced soon

MEETING

A virtual meeting of members of the National Executive Council of ISSUP Nigeria Chapter and State Coordinators holds:

Date: Saturday 6th May, 2023

Time: 5PM WAT

TRAININGS

1. **GISA-Colombo Plan UPC Core Virtual Training**

Date: 8th, 9th, 10th, 16th and 17th June 2023

For participation call 07053486054 or visit

www.gisainitiative.org to register.

2. **ISSUP Nigeria Chapter-Colombo Plan UPC Core virtual training for student members**

Date: July 2023

3. **Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Yaba – Colombo Plan Universal Recovery Course**

Date: 15th to 20th May 2023

Venue: Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Yaba, Lagos state

For participation, call 08168891515

4. **Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Yaba – Colombo Plan UTC 1&2, 3&4 Trainings**

Date: 15th to 20th May 2023

Venue: Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Yaba, Lagos state

For participation, call 08168891515

5. **Sound Mind Initiative – Colombo Plan Universal Recovery Curriculum (URC) Training**

Date: 8th to 12th May 2023

Venue: LASUCOM Ikeja, Lagos

For registration, call 08094294288



ISSUP Nigeria Chapter

Building a Multi disciplinary Network of Core and Allied Professionals
New members are welcome

Membership process

Visit www.issup.net

* then go to membership

* click on Apply Now or Apply Today and follow the procedure.

For further inquiries or how to join ISSUP Nigeria, reach us on:

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Or send mail to: ISSUPNigeria@gmail.com