

## **GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC HEALTH UNITS IN HOSPITALS**

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## **Background**

Public Health Units (PHU) in hospitals have long been identified as the appropriate institutions to co-ordinate public health activities within hospitals and also serve as the link with Metropolitan, Municipal and District Health Directorates for responses to be made. A functional public health unit will give the opportunity for hospitals to conduct

health assessment, develop hospital guidelines and assure the health of hospital staff clients and communities.

There have been instances where health care workers have suffered morbidity and mortality from health care associated infections before authorities are alerted because of the lack of effective facility-based public health surveillance system. In this regard, the public health unit will work closely with all units in the hospital.

A functional PHU will bridge the gap between public health and clinical care services in the hospital as well as between the hospital and MMDAs. Data generated from PHU activities will allow for prompt notification of priority health events and timely response.

Therefore all hospitals are required to establish PHUs.

### **Purpose and objectives of the guidelines**

The purpose is to guide the establishment of PHUs in all public hospitals in Ghana in order to:

- strengthen surveillance of all health events in hospitals;
- assist in the control and prevention of health events of public health importance in the hospital;
- facilitate the establishment of screening services for non communicable diseases for staff and general public
- strengthen the functional linkage between the hospital and MMDAs
- protect health and safety of staff and clients and communities
- Support hospital research

### **Organogram of the PHU**

The Public Health Unit shall be located within the hospital as one of the units under the direct supervision of the Medical Superintendent/ Medical Director. The Medical Superintendent/ Medical Director is the primary recipient of all reports from the PHU. The head of the PHU shall have other staff of different expertise to support the execution of the mandate of the unit. The public health unit will work closely with all units in the hospital. Specific tasks of staff will be clearly defined by management

### **Staffing**

The head of the unit shall be a Public Health Practitioner preferably having qualification of Masters in Public Health. The proposed staffing of the PHU shall include the following categories of health workers;

- Medical Officer(s)
- Public Health Nurse(s)
- Disease Control Officer(s)

- Community Health Nurse(s)
- Nutrition Officer(s)
- Health Promotion Officer(s)
- Environmental Health Officer (s)

The staff will work as a team to ensure that the objects of the unit are achieved. The expertise of other cadres would be used whenever necessary.

### **Functions of the public health unit**

- Coordinate public health programmes in the hospital
- Provide immunisation and child welfare services
- Provide screening services for non communicable diseases
- Promote healthy living and life styles
- Provide health information to patients, clients and staff
- Review daily OPD consulting room, ward, registers for diseases of public health importance and take appropriate action
- Undertake surveillance on epidemic prone diseases and health care associated infections
- Implement drug resistance surveillance
- Lead in outbreak investigations in the health facility
- Notify the District Health Administration through the Medical Director/Medical Superintendent to follow-up cases in the community
- Conduct or assist in operational research activities in the Hospital and use the result to inform service quality and development.
- Provide occupational health and safety services for staff
- Facilitate and coordinate regenerative health and nutrition programmes among staff and clients of the Hospital.
- Ensure good food hygiene practices in the hospital
- Ensure good environmental hygiene and waste disposal
- Support national /regional /district public health activities
- Carry out other roles that may be assigned by the Medical Superintendent/Director

### **Reports**

- The unit shall collate, analyse and prepare and submit reports of its activities as required by the hospital and the GHS
- Information generated should be used to improve service delivery and public health
- The Medical Director/Superintendent is the primary recipient of all reports emanating from the hospital.

- All public health reports going out of the hospital shall be authorised by the Medical Director/ Superintendent or his/her representative
- Reporting shall follow the Ghana Health Service reporting system.

### **Funding**

- Activities of the public health unit shall be incorporated in the plans and budget of the hospital