

Promoting and supporting mental health in the workplace

The Human Resources Unit and the IITA-Clinic facilitated a mental health awareness seminar to support employees overcome challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Issues capable of causing emotional distress in the workplace include worries and concerns about job losses affecting the emotional health and well-being of employees, uncertainty, fears about the continuous escalation of COVID, lockdown of workplaces and employees asked to stay at home, and not being included among essential employees asked to come to work.

Highlights of issues discussed include mental health indicators, characteristics of a mentally healthy person, identifying

poor mental health cases, indicators of dysfunctional mental health, why people do not talk about mental health, and COVID-19 mental self-care.

Other important discussions centered around providing support for mental health from HR, focusing on suggested actions towards improving mental health, an employee assistance program (EAP), workplace care and support as well as line managers' role in supporting mental health.

Resource persons include Lilian Mendoza (Head of Human Resources), Lade Oke (Human Resources Manager), Wole Oladokun (Employee Services Manager), and Dr Samson Adeleke (Head, IITA Clinic).



Meet your dignity advisors in the hubs

To further the Institute's commitment to maintain a workplace free of discrimination and harassment, Human Resources initiated in 2015 a Dignity Advisor program that will enable staff members to access support as may be needed. Subsequently a group of 10 Dignity Advisors were identified.

Recently, another group of 10 Dignity Advisors were commissioned to represent the Hubs, having accepted to serve in their respective locations beginning from January 2020. The Dignity Advisors are key contact points in cases of harassment and discrimination in line with the policy. They provide advice to those who feel they are victims of harassment and/or discrimination or those accused of such behavior, and on the courses of action available to them. The Dignity Advisors offer a confidential and informal service to staff.

Rose Ndango

Rose joined IITA Cameroon as a senior laboratory analyst and has over the years occupied the positions of lab supervisor; she is presently Analytical Services Laboratory Manager. She is a chemist and food technologist from the



City University London and King's College, respectively. Rose is a good listener with the aptitude to support others, listen to their concerns, and provide advice.

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Emmanuel Alamu

Emmanuel is Associate Scientist (Food Science and Technology). He started work at IITA as a Research Associate in 2004. He became the Research Administrative manager in 2012 at the Crop Utilization Unit (now Food and Nutrition Sciences). He got his doctoral degree in 2014 and became a Postdoctoral fellow (Food Science and Technology) in 2015, and Associate Scientist (Food Science and Technology) in 2018. He belongs to several professional bodies and has many publications in reputable journals to his credit. Emmanuel is a man of high integrity, is mature, and always ready to help.



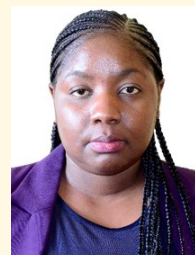
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Chikonjiwe Phiri Akakandelwa

Chikonjiwe is the Station Accountant for IITA-Zambia. She joined IITA the

Station in July 2018 as Assistant Accountant. She was appointed as Station Accountant in June this year. She is a holder of a Bachelor of Accountancy from the Copperbelt University, Zambia with 7 years' experience in Finance and Auditing. Before she joined IITA in 2018, Chikonjiwe held the role of Audit Supervisor at Grant Thornton, Lusaka. She is a calm and collected lady who can keep confidential information. She is also a good listener with a gentle character and is a team player.

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Meklit Chernet

Meklit currently works as a data scientist for the ACAL project and is stationed in the *icipe* office, Nairobi, Kenya. She says: "I have wonderful colleagues I care about. Given the significant impact of a pleasant work atmosphere on the health and productivity of individual employees in particular and society in



general, my colleagues' well-being has always been one of my primary concerns at work. As a dignity advisor, it will be my pleasure if I can be of use to support anyone and find solutions together."

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Linda Anita K. Neequaye

Linda has been working as a Finance & Administrative Assistant in IITA-Ghana since 2014 based in Accra. She holds a Master's degree in Public



Administration from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology (KNUST) in Ghana and a BSc, Business Administration, option Corporate & Business Development Studies from the Pentecost University College in Accra, Ghana. She is a good and compassionate listener.

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Taye Kufa Obso

Taye holds a BSc (Plant sciences, 1990) and MSc (Agronomy, 1998) from the Alemaya University in Ethiopia and a PhD (Agriculture, 2006) from Bonn University in Germany. He worked for



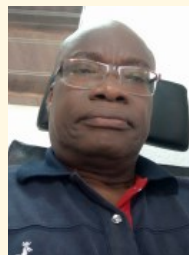
the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) at various coffee research and leadership positions and has nearly 28 years' experience.

He is currently a postdoctoral research fellow, a Coffee Systems Agronomist, and has been leading the coffee project at IITA-Burundi since May 2018 as a Coffee Specialist. He is passionate about interdisciplinary research-for-development work.

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Gontran N. Honfoga

Gontran started working at IITA-Benin in 1997 as an electronics technician, responsible for the installation and maintenance of laboratory equipment and telephone communication. He became head of the Facility Management Service of IITA-Benin in 2017.



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Sika Gbegbelegbe

Sika started work in IITA in 2015. Her current research primarily consists of projecting the future of agriculture in Africa under climate change. She is a Foresight Modeller. She earned



her PhD in agricultural economics in 2008. Sika is a good listener.

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Flora Eusebia Agani

Flora started working at IITA as an accounting assistant in 1999. She became an Accountant in the accounting department in 2015.



She holds a Professional Bachelor in Audit, Management Control and Taxation at International Polytechnic University of Benin. Flora deals a lot with colleagues and is compassionate.

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Emmanuel Obeng Asante

Emmanuel started working in IITA-Ghana as a driver in 2008. He became a Driver & Admin. Assistant, Corporate Services in 2015.



He holds a professional certificate in Motor Vehicle Mechanic from Koforidua Technical Institute, Ghana. Emmanuel is hardworking and a team player.

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Why we should pay attention to community spread of COVID-19

A formal description of community pattern of infections in recent cases of COVID-19 in Nigeria means there are people in the community whose infection source cannot be traced to travel to or from countries or states with active COVID-19 infection or contact with anyone who did. In short, the source of infection in such persons is unknown. This means that there are individuals in the community silently transferring the organisms to others undetected because they are not showing symptoms (asymptomatic). Some people who come into contact with them because of varied immunity levels will come down with severe symptoms without them or the person who infected them knowing.

The easiest way to protect ourselves is to treat everyone we come across, especially in the

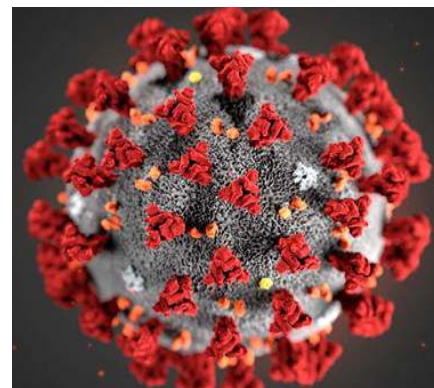
public domain, as a "suspect" and to take precautions in contracting the virus.

At the community transmission level, since everyone is a suspect, an extra layer of protection is necessary. Wearing face masks can provide some level of protection. It minimizes the tendency of the infected with symptoms or without symptoms to discharge organisms directly into the air that others can inhale. The probability of the uninfected not breathing in such contaminated air is also prevented by mask use.

However, techniques for appropriate wearing and removal of masks need to be learned. Besides, wearing of masks alone is insufficient for protection. It may even create a false sense of security. Hence, this must be combined with other measures

such as physical and social distancing, hand washing, use of sanitizers, and keeping unwashed hands away from face, mouth, nose, and eyes; avoiding crowds and gatherings; and avoiding going to public places to prevent undue risk of exposure.

Source: Dr Samson Adeleke, IITA Clinic



Contract Reviews, December 2019–May 2020

Name: Dr Alfred Dixon
 Designation: Director, Development and Delivery Office
 Location: Ibadan, Nigeria
 Seminar Topic: **Scaling-up and scaling-out of agricultural innovations at IITA—Duo for systemic change**
 Date: 6 December 2019



Name: Dr Agre Paterne
 Designation: Molecular Breeder
 Location: Ibadan, Nigeria
 Seminar Topic: **Application of genomics tools: Current and future way for excellence in yam breeding**
 Date: 22 April 2020



Name: Dr Edward Kanju
 Designation: Cassava Breeder/ Pathologist
 Location: Kampala, Uganda
 Seminar Topic: **Varietal response of cassava root yield components & root necrosis from Cassava Brown Streak Disease to season planting in Tanzania**
 Date: 8 January 2020



Name: Dr Richard Asare
 Designation: Cocoa Scientist
 Location: Accra, Ghana
 Seminar Topic: **Building resilient cocoa growing systems for food security and conservation of natural capital in West Africa**
 Date: 23 April 2020



Name: Dr Rousseau Djouaka
 Designation: Molecular Entomologist
 Location: Cotonou, Benin
 Seminar Topic: **The IITA AgroEcoHealth Platform, starting from ground zero towards new challenges**
 Date: 14 February 2020



Name: Dr Delphine Amah
 Designation: Regional Breeding Manager
 Location: Ibadan, Nigeria
 Seminar Topic: **Plantain improvement in IITA – setting the stage for modernization**
 Date: 24 April 2020



Name: Dr Christine Kreye
 Designation: Agronomist and West Africa Coordinator
 Location: Ibadan, Nigeria
 Seminar Topic: **Developing decision support tools for cassava in ACAI in southern Nigeria**
 Date: 25 March 2020



Name: Mr Godwin Atser
 Designation: Digital Extension & Advisory Services Specialist
 Location: Ibadan, Nigeria
 Seminar Topic: **Digital disruption in the scaling of the Six Steps to Cassava Weed Management & Best Planting Practices toolkit**
 Date: 6 May 2020



Name: Dr Marc Schut
 Designation: Senior Innovation and Scaling Scientist, IITA Country Representative for Rwanda
 Location: Kigali, Rwanda
 Seminar Topic: **Advancing the science and practice of scaling innovation to transform African agriculture**
 Date: 8 April 2020



Name: Mr. Sheik Rogers
 Designation: Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, ATASP I Outreach Project
 Location: Abuja
 Seminar Topic: **Tracking CG Centers' contribution to the transformation of Nigeria's cassava, rice, and sorghum sectors: Evidences from ATASP-1 Outreach M&E**
 Date: 8 May 2020



World Hypertension Day

IITA Medical Unit joined millions around the world to commemorate World Hypertension Day, usually celebrated every 17 May. Dr Samson Adeleke, in his awareness communication to all staff, elaborated on the topic.

Hypertension is elevated blood pressure above the normal range of:

100–130
 ----- mmHg
 60–80

Blood pressure is the force exerted on the blood vessels that convey blood from the heart, during the two phases (contraction and relaxation) of heartbeat, for subsequent distribution to the different organs of the body.

The numerator (upper value) is the pressure during contraction, while the denominator (lower value) is the pressure when the heart relaxes.

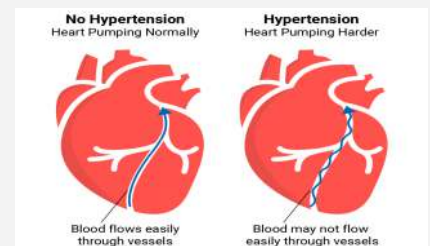
Hypertension is asymptomatic in most cases. It is thus essential to check your blood pressure regularly.

Several, easy-to-use digital devices that you can use on your own, in addition to medical facility checks, are now available to monitor blood pressure.

You are encouraged to check your blood pressure regularly to know your blood pressure readings and seek medical attention if the values are consistently out of range for early intervention and to prevent stroke, kidney failure, heart, and eye-related complications.

It is also important to adopt blood pressure lowering lifestyle measures such as:

1. Regular exercise
2. Low salt in your diet
3. Consumption of a diet rich in fruits and vegetables
4. Quitting smoking
5. Maintaining a healthy weight
6. Avoiding or reducing alcohol consumption



Quotable quote
"The greatest wealth is health"

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