



National Public Health Institute Of Liberia

Preventing and Controlling Public Health Threats

Office of the Director General

Ref. No: NPHIL/RL/MPF-ADG/181/2020

July 23, 2020

Dr. Wilhelmina Jallah
Office of the
Incident Manager – COVID-19 Response
Ministry of Health
Congo Town Back Road
Republic of Liberia

Dear Honorable Minister Jallah:

Kindly allow me respond to a letter from your honorable office which was dated July 23, 2020 and centers around issue of dissemination of laboratory result that resulted into embarrassing situation with Mr. Alaric Tokpah.

I would like to give my perspective on this particular statement in the letter, "Example is the result you gave to Professor Alaric Tokpah. Such result has caused embarrassment to the response and has led to further decline of public trust in the testing system".

Please permit to provide some clarifications on the overall issues of disseminating laboratory results. I have always supported the Incident Management System (IMS) with the agreed upon Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the release of laboratory results. Below are examples:

1. There were instances, when you honorable minister, Dr. Kateh and I were asked to give positive results and we did this diligently. When we decided to shift it to Montserrado County Health Team for positive and negative results through the Psychosocial and Mental Health Pillar. I have diligently followed this protocol except under some very extenuating situations.
2. Under my leadership as IM, we recruited medical students to direct medical response for the 14 Military and further asked them to give out negative results, while the three of us would gave the positive results. When the IMS decided to change from the students to the Psychosocial/Mental Health, we told the 5th year medical students to discontinue and over three months now they have not release results.

Since the decision to shift the release of positive and negative results to the Montserrado County Health Team and the Psychosocial Pillar respectively, I have had nothing to do with the release of laboratory results, but have assisted to prevent crises created by the long delayed in the release of results or the misplacement of results as well as for highly political or security results and finally to ensure that travelers get their results in a timely fashion so that the IMS is not embarrass. Examples of the above are as follows:

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mpf 07/23/2020

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July 24, 2020



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1. I have had multiple interventions between the physicians at the 14 Military, Jallah Medical and the NRL team on the delays or at times misplacement of results. There have been multiple heated exchanges between the medical doctors at these facilities and the laboratory Pillar Fahn Taweh as the lead. I have had multiple calls, emails and WhatsApp communication to resolve these very long undue delays on getting laboratory results.
Just a few days ago, I had to work with the physicians to ensure that patients at one of the treatment units from going on hunger strike because their results were either consistently delayed or were given selectively. I have the evidence to that effect and we worked on it quietly.
2. I was up all night quietly working with Dr. Hessoue and Fahn Taweh to obtain the laboratory result of the late Deputy NSA Director Benjamin Blamo, as we were under pressure to determine if he was positive in order to track and trace high profile officials. Fahn told us the results got missing at the NRL and they had to send a new team to Jallah Medical to get specimens. I had quietly assured Honorable Musa Dean, 102 Melvin Sackor and the NSA Director to get the result.
3. The repeated delayed in releasing laboratory results is causing serious embarrassment for travelers leaving Liberia. A sad day for me was to wake up to a phone call from Dr. Sia Watta Camanor and Ms. Dama Koffa that the patients they had been trying to medically evacuate from Liberia, the late Ms. Jane Joe had died. There was a chattered flight awaiting to pick up the sick patient and her sister but first needed a laboratory result. I was on the phone for two days with the laboratory but the results kept on delaying until the patient sadly died. In such extreme instance, I tried to work with the laboratory team to accelerate the release of the results. I have not disobeyed the protocol as indicated in your email except where our inaction would have caused great embarrassment for the response. When I have intervened, it has been for the good of the system and to save us all and keep the trust and confidence of the public.

Honorable Minister, as you can see from the above examples, all I have ever done was to ensure that laboratory results flow smoothly from the laboratory to those who urgently need them (**the military hospital and travelers**) in order to minimize the increasing distrust in our ability to respond timely over the last several weeks.

Let me now provide you with the context on the issue of Dr. Alaric Tokpah. I will indicate to you that I was not releasing his laboratory result to him but trying to get him his traveler medical approval certificate as we have always done. My goal was to quietly avoid a big embarrassment to the IMS for his missed flight because we did not provide him his travel medical certificate. I would have quietly done this as I have been doing had I not been misled by the Laboratory Pillar lead, Mr. Fahn Taweh.



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At around 10:49 AM, I got a text on my phone stating the followings, "Good morning Dr. Fallah. My name is Alaric K. Tokpah. I did the COVID-19 test at SKD Stadium on Wednesday, July 8, 2020 for the purpose of obtaining travel approval. My flight leaves Liberia today. I therefore appeal for your assistance in this regard".

I called Fahn Taweh to let me know the status of Dr. Tokpah's result so we could help produce his travel certificate. Fahn reported that it was him who actually gave my phone number to Professor Tokpah as they are both from Gbarpolu County. I asked Fahn as to what was his result so I could ask Trokon Ajavon to prepare his certificate. Fahn came to my office and reported that Professor Tokpah's test had been run and had the first result as indeterminate. They had repeated his test and it came out negative and yes we could print his certificate to travel. This was now about 5pm and most of the staff had left NPHIL. All attempts to get Trokon by phone proved futile and Professor Tokpah was worried about his result. It was on the basis of the urgency that I asked Trokon Yeabah to send me a letter version of the certificate so I could sign it so that he does not miss his flight.

After the letter was done I signed and stamped the letter which was given to him by 5 PM. Less than 20 minutes after he got his result, we got a call from the data Manager of the laboratory, Joseph Tehyor, that Professor Tokpah was positive contrary to what the Laboratory Pillar lead had told me. I then called Fahn and alerted him about this and according to him he reached out to the CHO of the MCHT for them to call and alert Professor Tokpah. I then texted professor Tokpah that he could not travel and apologize in the misstep in the result. I have since taken the heat from the media without throwing Fahn Taweh, the architect of this confusion under the bus. As a leader, you take the beating for your men and then you go in house to make the corrections. Several persons suggested that Fahn received serious reprimand for this confusion. However, I have called him to ensure due diligence in the laboratory results as they have consequences. There was no way I was trying to give laboratory results but to provide travel documents as I have always been doing.

I am committed to supporting the IMS, but we must try to overcome these challenges if we are going to win the trust of the communities in our fight against the COVID-19 virus:

1. We cannot have confirmed cases in the communities for several days because our ambulances do not have gasoline/fuel or are broken. Many patients have called and asked to be taken to the Treatment Unit but the IMS cannot provide an ambulance to move them from the communities. This sows seeds of distrust in the response.
2. We cannot take specimens and not give feedback to people for three or four days. They wait for long while repeatedly calling for their results to no avail. It just reinforces the distrust in the response.
3. We cannot collect specimens and later say they are missing and need to recollect these specimens. The communities will think that there is a disconnect between what the IMS is saying about the severity of coronavirus and our inability to speedily give them their results. Testing, testing and testing has been the fundamental containment strategy.

I am hopeful that my response provided the needed clarity on the issue of Dr. Alaric Tokpah and my humble observations will be given serious considerations if we are to continuously build trust with the communities.



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Yours sincerely,

Mosoka P. Fallah, Ph.D., MPH, MA
Director General

