On Friday, July 19, 2019, a high-powered delegation from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in partnership with the Center for Global Health (CGH) has paid a courtesy call on the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL).

The delegation which comprised experts US Centers for Disease Control Foundation along with the Center for Global Health is in-country to follow-up on ‘Programmatic Objectives’ aimed at exploring CDCF success stories and lessons learned from previous projects; support CDC Country Offices in advancing their public-private partnership strategies; and pay courtesy calls on relevant stakeholders.

Members of the delegation included Dr. Rebecca Mae Martin - Director, Center for Global Health, CDC, Dr. Judith Ann Monroe; President and CEO, CDC Foundation, Ms. Sukeshi Mehta Roberts; Special Assistant, CGH, CDC, Ms. Monica Glass Thornton; Senior Advancement Officer, CDC Foundation and Ms. Gail Lucille McCabe - Executive Director, Creative Media Matters.

The working visit took the delegation to the Ministry of Health for talks with the Minister and Deputy Minister of Health.

Meanwhile, the delegation returned to NPHIL later in the day and also met with CDC Cooperative Agreement (CoAg) Partners to conduct an overview of partners’ activities in support of CDC Liberia’s Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) work plan.

“It’s amazing to listen to you, Liberians, and all the different partners around the table. It’s wonderful that you can come together to review the data from the counties, and how the data impact what you do in response and coordination.”

- Dr. Rebecca Mae Martin

In This Issue
- CDC-CGH Delegation Visits NPHIL
- Scientific Conference Gears Up
- NPHIL Investigates Alleged Zika Discovery in Liberia
- Supporting the Health Sector - A Gift to C.B Dunbar & Phebe
- Activities in Pictorial
Scientific Conference Gears Up

The 2nd Annual Emmet A. Dennis National Scientific Conference will run from Monday, August 27, 2019 to Wednesday, August 29, 2019. Over 300 delegates from various institutions, including university students from across the country will be in attendance. More then 100 oral and posters presentations are expected to showcase local capacity for public health research and practice. About 7 expert speakers are also expected. The theme for the Conference is “Strengthening Global Health - The Liberia Experience.”

Who is hosting this conference?

The Conference is hosted by the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL), and co-hosted by the Africa Field Epidemiology Network (AFENET) and the University of Liberia (UL).

Benefits of presenting an abstract

In 2018, about 13 abstracts were published in both local and international journals. This year, 10 scholarships will be awarded to the best abstracts presenters to study at home and abroad in various disciplines. Also, participants to the event will benefit preparedness and

“Publish or you perish.” - Professor Ephraim Ngwafor

Supporting the Health Sector

- A Gift to C.B Dunbar and Phebe

A team of Berlin, Germany-based freelancers, through the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL), has donated a consignment of examination gloves to C.B Dunbar and Phebe Hospitals in Gbarnga, Bong County.

In February 2019, Laura Salm-Reifferscheidt, a freelance journalist and Carl Giersstorfer, a freelance documentary film maker, visited Liberia to understand and document the country’s post Ebola situation and how the system has recovered.

Making the presentation to the two hospitals on behalf of the team on Thursday, July 4, 2019, Mrs. Victoria Smith-Mulbah, Director, Supply Chain Management and Logistics, NPHIL, thanked Laura and Carl and expressed their support to the two hospitals in Bong County.
The National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL) investigation into a publication of Zika virus discovery in Liberia has found no substance in the publication. In its Monday, July 22, 2019 edition, the Daily Observer Newspaper published an article captioned “Zika Virus Identified in Liberia?” in which a Physical Therapist, Catherine Kurkett Kamara, of the SALT Rehabilitation Clinic made claims of diagnosing ZIKA Virus in a patient whom she has been managing since 2016 at the clinic.

In its spontaneous scientific response, NPHIL consistent with its mandate, as the entity responsible for disease surveillance in Liberia, swiftly dispatched an ‘Investigative Team’ to SALT Rehabilitation Clinic in Zubah Town, Paynesville, outside Monrovia to ascertain and verify the relevant medical information in line with scientific diagnosis, since the emergence of such an infection in Liberia is a cause for concern.

The investigation established that SALT Rehabilitation Clinic is located in Zubah Town, Paynesville and is housed in a three-bedroom apartment. The Investigative Team comprised personnel from the Montserrado County Health Team, and the Divisions of Infectious Disease and Epidemiology of the National Public Health Institute of Liberia and Global Health.

During the fact-finding visit at SALT Rehabilitation Clinic, the Investigative Team were met on arrival by a personnel of SALT Rehabilitation Clinic who introduced himself as an occupational and speech therapist and had been trained locally through (in-service method) at the facility. According to the Investigative Team, SALT Rehabilitation Clinic’s Lead Clinician, Mr. Theophilus T. Richards was neither available during the visit nor was Dr. Catherine Kurkett Kamara who is said to currently be in the U.S.A. However, the healthcare worker on-duty was interviewed, and he provided some information about the clinical care provided at the facility, which includes physio, occupational and speech therapies. The Investigative Team also requested and reviewed the ‘patients’ records’.

The two patients’ records that is being managed at the SALT Rehabilitation Clinic - admitted with a preliminary diagnosis of Developmental Delay was provided at the behest of the Investigative Team. The first patient, a 5-year old male, first seen on October 17, 2015 was diagnosed with generalized weakness in the arms, neck and legs. On the other hand, the second patient, 23-month-old male, was seen at the clinic on July 10, 2019 with similar presentations and a primary diagnosis of developmental delay secondary to congenital anomalies and Zika Virus Disease. The investigation established that there was no information relating to the travel history of either the patients or parents, which was further compounded by no laboratory test results available in the patient records that supported the diagnosis of Zika Virus.
The people, and the Actions

Mr. Henry A. Blake (NPHIL), Dr. Mosoka Fallah (NPHIL) and Dr. Judith Ann Monroe (CDC Foundation)

Stakeholders and partners look on as Dr. Mae Martin speaks at NEPRC Meeting

Some members of CDC Delegation and partners at the NEPRC Meeting

Participants at the Influenza Contingency Plan and Protocol Validation Meeting - Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, July 24 - 27, 2019

Dr. Rebecca Mae Martin and Cllr. Tolbert Nyenswah co-chaired NEPRC Meeting

Partners at the weekly NEPRC Meeting

Dr. Mosoka Fallah (NPHIL) speaks at the Influenza Contingency Plan and Protocol Validation Meeting

Dr. Julius Monday (WHO) speaks at the Influenza Contingency Plan and Protocol Validation Meeting
Call for Sustained Awareness as Nat’l Codex Committee Ends One-Day Stakeholders’ Meeting

A one-day Stakeholder’s meeting of the National Codex Committee has ended in Monrovia with a call for sustained awareness on the activities of codex in Liberia. The meeting was held on Wednesday, July 3, 2019 at the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL) offices in Oldest Congo Town.

Liberia is a founding member of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC); an international body established with the mandate to develop food standards under the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Program in order to protect the health of consumers and to ensure fair practices in the food trade. CAC has a membership of 189 countries. Since its launch in 1963, the Codex Alimentarius Commission has developed hundreds of such standards and provided guidance for improving food safety and nutrition in each of its Member States and globally. Liberia has been a member of CAC since 1971.

The National Codex Committee (NCC) is a national body of stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, with the primary responsibility to ensuring that Liberia has national position to Codex Alimentarius meeting and for guiding national policies on food standards, safety and international food trade issues. Every country that is a member of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) is under obligation to establish and have a functional National Codex Committee (NCC). The Minister of Health represented by the Director General of the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL) chairs the NCC, while the secretary is the Director of the National Standards Lab.

During the meeting, stakeholders highlighted the importance of sustained awareness on the activities of codex and strengthening its work amongst national stakeholders in Liberia. Reports on the activities of codex, the AU positions for CAC42, the annual work plan for 2019-2020 as well as proposed committees to enhance the work of codex were all endorsed by the NCC. Also, the Cultivating of New Frontier in Agriculture-Liberia Agri-business Activity (CNFA-LADA), an international partner to the CAC was presented certificate of recognition for its contribution towards national food safety in the country.