**A COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE 2023 NATIONAL MEDICAL AND HEALTH LAW CONFERENCE AND INDUCTION OF MEMBERS OF THE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH LAW (IMHL), HELD ON NOVEMBER 21, 2023 AT THE MERIT HOUSE, MAITAMA, ABUJA**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The Institute of Medical and Health Law (IMHL) held its 3rd National Medical and Health Law Conference on the 21st day of November, 2023 at the Merit House, Maitama, Abuja. The theme of the Conference was **“Maintaining Optimal Mental Health in a Distressed Social-Political Economy”** It was aimed to address mental health challenges in the present distressed social-political economy of Nigeria and how to maintain optimal health therein.

The participants were new inductees of IMHL, seasoned legal and medical professionals, students of law and nursing students, representatives of various media organizations, representatives of faculties of law and medicine from various universities, among others.

**OBSERVATIONS:**

In the course of the deliberations, the discussants at the conference noted the following:

1. Mental health is not only a state of mental disorder but it encompasses the general wellbeing of humans as well as the ability to cope in spite of the harsh conditions of the society. Optimal mental health enables people to put in their best.
2. Mental health is fundamental to the human and economic growth and development of a country.
3. Looking at the present political and economic situations in Nigeria, it is difficult to avoid mental health issues.
4. There is a need to keenly look into issues that seem not to matter, otherwise, they will eventually become matters arising.
5. Economic and political conditions are major factors that must be considered in maintaining optimal mental health in a distressed social-political economy. Maintaining mental health in a distressed economy involves multi-faceted integration of roles, eg the individuals, families, communities, professionals, the government, etc.
6. The National Mental Health Act 2021 make novel provisions for the protection of the patient’s rights and well as institutional organs for mental health administration.
7. There are several challenges regarding implementation of health laws. It takes creativity and determination to ensure adequate implementation.
8. To improve mental health, the government should focus on poverty reduction and associated development.
9. It is important to seek assistance early not to indulge in the use of hard substances.
10. The government needs to do that which is necessary and equitable to promote optimal mental health.
11. There is need to work as a team, seeking for solution and working with the government for optimal impact.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Make conscious effort to be alive in the present depressed world.
2. It is important for the Institute to look to the development of ethics in relation to mental health.
3. There should be stress management among working class.
4. There is need to encourage people to seek help early.
5. There is need to balance work and wellbeing, make good laws and policies and ensure highest ethical standards.
6. Efforts should be made to maintain optimal mental health through a multi-faceted approach, maintaining positive mindset, self-care practices, expanding access to mental health resources, setting of appropriate policies, etc.

**CONCLUSION**

An assessment of the economic state of Nigerians reveals that mental ill-health is very free to contract. The synergy between law and medicine in ensuring optimal mental health cannot be overemphasized. The new National Mental Health Act makes appreciable improvement in mental health legal regime in Nigeria. The law makes provisions for the protection of patients’ rights and that of medical practitioners. All parties concerned are to ensure that the mental health law in Nigeria is upheld and protected.