

National Dermatology (Specialist) Hospital, Garkida, Adamawa State (Establishment) Bill, 2021 (SB. 631)

LEAD DEBATE ON NATIONAL DERMATOLOGY (SPECIALIST) HOSPITAL BILL, 2021 (SB. 631)

Sponsor: Senator Aishatu Dahiru Ahmed (Binani) Adamawa Central

Mr President, distinguished colleagues, as far back as 1929, an international hospital was established for Garkida Agricultural Leper Colony by the Church of the Brethren Mission (USA). It was an ambitious effort located on 2,500 acres of land designed for treatment of leprosy and other illnesses, isolation center and training of lepers in craft and improved agricultural methods. It was a reputable hospital with 12,507 leprosy patients admitted between 1929 and 2002 with reasonable number of patients coming from neighbouring countries.

With the advent of antibiotics in the 1940s and the use of dapsone to treat leprosy, the role of the hospital changed. Dr Roy Pfaltzgraff the Medical Superintendent (1954-1982), transformed the hospital to an internationally well-known center for developmental work in surgical rehabilitation, physiotherapy, protective footwear, prostheses and training. In 1976 the Church of the Brethren Mission made the Hospital to become an international Referral Centre for leprosy and dermatology patients.

The Church of the Brethren Mission ran the hospital until 1976 when it was handed over to Ekilisiyan Yan Uwa Church in Nigeria (EYN). The EYN had minimal capacity to maintain the hospital at an international level. Therefore the Netherlands Government took over the hospital and ran it for two years before handing it over to the Ministry of Health of the former Gongola State.

Mr President, Distinguished colleagues, it is unfortunate that 92 years after, this noble work of providing tertiary health care at the reach of the common man was neglected and allowed to decay in vigor and extent, thereby became weak and inconsequential.

I am however encouraged by the efforts of the Federal Government in providing specialized health care for specific clusters of diseases, such as National Orthopedic Hospitals, National Eye Centre, National Psychiatric Hospitals, National Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital and National Infectious Diseases Hospital.

Notwithstanding, Mr President, Distinguished colleagues, I want to draw your attention to the fact that the existing international tertiary dermatology hospital in Garkida Adamawa State has been conspicuously left out in the federal government's drive to provide tertiary health care services to Nigerians.

A dermatology hospital to provide diagnostic, curative, promotive and rehabilitative dermatology, cosmetic dermatology, allergy, all skin and hair treatment is seriously and urgently needed to fill the gap and the dermatology hospital, Garkida, Adamawa State naturally fits all the requirements for a national dermatology hospital.

There are many reasons for a National Dermatology Hospital in Garkida:

1. The Hospital will allow speciality care providers focus on particular areas of care in which they have extensive training and education.
2. The tears and frustration expressed by patients with pigmentary disorders and the psychological impact of these disorders will be effectively handled by the Hospital.
3. Skin cancer experts and other areas of skin conditions will be produced from the academic section of the National Dermatology Hospital.
4. It is a well known destination for patients all over the country for nearly a century.
5. Limited infrastructural and academic template for an international dermatological hospital already exists.
6. The Hospital will provide sustained leadership in patient care, in research, and in training leaders of dermatological speciality in an environment that fosters creativity, diversity, inclusiveness and synergy leading to a regional and national recognition for their clinical expertise and teaching.
7. The host community will benefit from improved access to services, enhance health of the community, advance medical knowledge, and reduce government burden.
8. Hospitals tend to be the largest employer in the healthcare field in their given area and it is expected that hospital will help stabilize the community's economy, and promote careers in health, particularly at nearby high schools and colleges.
9. The people of the North East geopolitical zone and especially medically under-served, low-income, and/or minority populations will be served.
10. Much needed federal government presence will be enhanced by the establishment of this hospital, a project that is long overdue.

Mr. President, Distinguished colleagues, I urge you therefore to unreservedly support this Bill as this will provide the much needed health care and academic services as well as restore the lost glory of the international nature of the Hospital in Garkida Adamawa State.

Thank you all for your usual support.