



LATE OLUBUNMI DEBORAH AKINSOLA

1980 - 2021

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Goodwill Message

Esteemed guests, fellow advocates, and friends of the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative, It is with immense pride and gratitude that I stand before you today to celebrate the one-year anniversary of our remarkable initiative. A year ago, we embarked on this journey, driven by the unwavering spirit of compassion and the shared goal of improving the lives of individuals living with sickle cell disease.

In this short time, we have made significant strides. We have raised awareness about sickle cell disease, provided support to patients and their families, and advocated for policies that address the unique challenges faced by this community. We have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of hope, resilience, and collective action.

As we reflect on the past year, we must also look to the future with optimism and determination. There is still much work to be done. We must continue to fight for equitable access to healthcare, innovative treatments, and comprehensive support services. We must empower individuals with sickle cell disease to live their fullest potential, free from the burdens of this condition.

I want to express my sincere appreciation to our dedicated team, our generous donors, and our unwavering volunteers. Your commitment to our mission has been instrumental in our success. Together, we have built a strong foundation, and I am confident that we will continue to make a lasting impact on the lives of countless individuals.

As we celebrate this milestone, let us renew our pledge to the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative. Let us work together to create a world where sickle cell disease is no longer a barrier to a fulfilling life.

Thank you.

***Akinsola Oluwafemi Ezekiel Arpa, mcippon.
Founder, BASC Initiative***

FUNDRAISING MAGAZINE PRODUCTION TEAM



Welcome to the inaugural edition of The Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell initiative Voice , a magazine dedicated to shedding light on the realities, challenges, and triumphs of those living with sickle cell disease.

This effort is more than a publication; it is a movement that

aims to raise awareness, create collaboration, and advocate for impactful change in the lives of millions impacted by this condition. Each story told, each finding highlighted, and all voices amplified represent a step forward in breaking barriers of stigma, improving healthcare access, and spurring research for improved treatments and, one day, a cure.

Our mission is clear: to empower the sickle cell community and educate the broader public. Together, as readers, contributors, and advocates, we can turn this platform into a beacon of hope and resilience.

We appreciate everyone who joined us on this journey and dedicated their time, money, and voice to this cause, the fight against sickle cell disease is one that requires more than compassion—it demands resources. From funding life-saving research to providing accessible healthcare and community programs, monetary support is the backbone of our mission. Every penny contributed has the power to improve lives, accelerate breakthroughs, and bring us closer to a cure.

We need your help. By investing in this cause, you are not just donating; you are offering hope to millions and ensuring that no one fights this battle alone.. One edition at a time, let's turn The Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative Voice into a force for change.

*Warm regards,
Awoleye Debby Tomisin
(RN, RM, RPHN, BNSc)
Editor-in-Chief*

Managing Editor and Fundraising Coordinator:

Mr Aremo John Oluwole

Content Writers:

Nurse Olakunle Lydia

Akinwande Deborah

Adelere Grace

Opemipo Olubolade

Photo and Video Editor :

Mr Olalekan Ajao

Mr Ezekiel Aluko

Proofreader/Copy Editor

Dr Tomi Tosin-Owojuyigbe

Adelere Grace

Dr Adeoye Yemisi

Distribution Coordinator:

Miss Deborah Amaechi

Assistant Distribution

Coordinator:

Opemipo Olubolade

Social Media Manager:

Miss Ossai hope

Assistant Social Media:

Manager Olawole Joe Joan

Printer/Production Manager.

Mr. Moses

Finance Manager.

Mr Benjamin Adedoyin

Treasurer:

Mrs Adegbite Pelumi

BASC INITIATIVE MAIDEN SYMPOSIUM



THEME:

Empowering Volunteers: Commitment, Rewards, and Public Speaking Skills for Impactful Service.

With the goal of achieving zero sickle cell births within the next two decades, the Bunmi Akinsole Sickle Cell Initiative (BASCI) is focused on educating communities and providing comprehensive support to people living with sickle cell disease. Recognizing that achieving this ambitious target requires collective effort, BASCI has expanded its volunteer base, training new recruits in medical, psychological, and public outreach support. This expansion aligns with BASCI's ongoing campaign, the "Know Our Genotype Campaign," designed to raise awareness on the importance of genotype compatibility in preventing sickle cell births. As part of this campaign, BASCI organized a symposium on June 8, 2024, at UI Hotels, Ibadan, with the theme, "Empowering Volunteers: Commitment, Rewards, and Public Speaking Skills for

Impactful Service." The event brought together volunteers, medical professionals, and community leaders to explore the values and skills necessary for impactful volunteer service. Through a series of presentations and interactive sessions, the symposium equipped participants with essential knowledge for contributing to BASCI's mission.

Opening Session

The symposium commenced at 11:00 AM, moderated by Dr. Tomi Tosin-Owojuyigbe, a dedicated volunteer with BASCI. Dr. Mrs. Adenike-Adeniyi Aremo, the Research Director for BASCI, led the opening prayer, setting a reflective tone for the day's proceedings. Following this, Mr. John Aremo, BASCI's Administrative Head, delivered the welcome address. His message underscored the critical role volunteers play in achieving BASCI's mission, emphasizing that their efforts are fundamental to transforming lives

and communities affected by sickle cell disease.

Presentations and Interactive Sessions

1. Vision of BASCI

The Medical Director of BASCI, Dr. Ogunjimi Temitope, elaborated on BASCI's mission, programs, and ongoing initiatives to combat sickle cell disease. Dr. Temitope emphasized BASCI's vision to reduce the prevalence of sickle cell births through awareness and community outreach, highlighting the importance of genotype testing in making informed reproductive decisions. By illustrating the real-life impact of BASCI's programs, she inspired volunteers to view their roles as vital to the organization's success.

2. Volunteering: Challenges, Rewards, and Managing Expectations

The first guest speaker, Sr. Augustina Offor, Head of Program for Caritas/Women and Child Rights Department, presented a session on the fundamentals of volunteering. Using a PowerPoint presentation, she delved into the history, significance, and forms of volunteer work, emphasizing the meaningful connections that can be formed through service. Sr. Offor also addressed common challenges faced by volunteers, such as balancing personal commitments and managing emotional strain. She provided practical strategies for overcoming these obstacles, stressing that resilience and adaptability are key qualities in successful volunteers. Her comprehensive approach equipped attendees with the mindset necessary to navigate the complexities of volunteer work, making the experience more fulfilling and impactful. A digital copy of her presentation was shared with participants for reference.

3. Mastering Public Speaking for Outreach

Public speaking skills are crucial for BASCI volunteers, who frequently interact with communities to spread awareness. Miss Ayanwusi from the University of Ibadan's Social Works Department conducted an interactive session on public speaking essentials. She provided a structured guide on overcoming the fear of speaking, organizing content effectively, and engaging audiences through storytelling and body language. Her encouraging teaching style helped attendees feel comfortable, fostering a support-

ive environment for questions and discussions. Miss Ayanwusi's emphasis on practical, actionable techniques resonated deeply with the audience. She highlighted the importance of clear communication in spreading BASCI's message, outlining strategies that volunteers could use to articulate their points confidently. By the end of her session, volunteers felt more prepared to serve as BASCI's advocates, helping to amplify the organization's message and educate the public on genotype awareness. The presentations concluded with a lively Q&A session, moderated by Dr. Tomi Tosin-Owojuyigbe, where participants discussed specific challenges and received guidance from the speakers. This segment encouraged peer-to-peer learning and strengthened the sense of community among volunteers.



Cross Section of Participants at the Symposium

Closing Session

In her closing remarks, Dr. Tomi Tosin-Owojuyigbe extended gratitude to all participants and speakers, acknowledging their contributions to the success of the symposium. Mr. John Aremo then delivered a vote of thanks, highlighting the collective effort required to combat sickle cell disease and expressing appreciation for the dedication of BASCI's volunteers.

The final part of the program introduced new volunteers to BASCI's mission and vision, while the Administrative Head provided an overview of the organization's current initiatives. This introductory segment served as an orientation, enabling new members to understand their roles and the broader impact of their involvement with BASCI.



Miss Abisola (Volunteer) asking question at the Symposium

One of the key highlights of the symposium was the team formation exercise, which allowed both new and experienced volunteers to identify their areas of contribution. The volunteers were divided into four teams, each with specific responsibilities aligned with BASCI's goals:

1. Outreach Team: This team is tasked with planning and executing BASCI's community events, as well as implementing the "Know Our Genotype" campaign in various communities. Members include Tolu Oyewole, Makinde Ibukun, and Oyesiku Titilade.

2. Media Team: Responsible for managing BASCI's online presence, this team handles content creation, event documentation, and media outreach. Members include Oyinloye Abisola, Babalola Anuoluwa, and Yusuf Funmi.

3. Research Team: This team supports BASCI's research initiatives, conducting data analysis and contributing to ongoing studies on sickle cell disease. Key members are Aremo Adenike-Adeniyi, Adesokan Nathaniel, and Omolola Ayanwusi.

4. Health Professionals Team: This group of critical medical and psychological support to individuals with sickle cell disease. Members include Dr. Ogunjimi Temitope, Omolola Ayanwusi, and Oyinloye Abisola.

The team formation exercise fostered collaboration, encouraging volunteers to leverage their unique strengths to make a meaningful impact. This structure also allows BASCI to deploy re-

sources more efficiently, ensuring that each team has clear objectives and can operate cohesively.

Special Highlights and Reflection

One of the most memorable moments of the symposium was the commitment shown by volunteers who traveled from distant locations, such as Miss Oyinloye Abisola from Osogbo and Mrs. Ogunleye Bolanle from Iwo both from Osun State.

Their dedication exemplified the spirit of BASCI and reinforced the importance of unity in pursuing the organization's mission.

The symposium concluded with a renewed sense of purpose among attendees. The knowledge gained through the presentations, coupled with the connections formed during the event, laid a strong foundation for future volunteer activities. Equipped with essential skills and a shared vision, BASCI's volunteers are now better prepared to advocate for sickle cell awareness and offer meaningful support to individuals and families affected by the disease.

Conclusion

The BASCI symposium was a resounding success, offering valuable insights into the principles of volunteering, the impact of public engagement, and the personal rewards of service. The event underscored BASCI's commitment to eradicating sickle cell disease through sustained efforts in community education, advocacy, and support for affected individuals.

By empowering volunteers with the skills and knowledge required for effective service, BASCI is building a network of compassionate and capable individuals who are dedicated to making a difference. Through initiatives like this symposium, BASCI is not only expanding its outreach capacity but also creating a lasting legacy of hope and resilience in the fight against sickle cell disease.

With a clear vision and a motivated team, BASCI is poised to continue making strides toward a future where sickle cell disease no longer threatens the lives and dreams of individuals across Nigeria and Africa.

By AREMO JOHN OLUWOLE
Administrative Head

RAISING THE BEACON



The Maiden 'Know Your Genotype' Campaign at Estate High School, Akobo, Ibadan.

In a city like Ibadan, where awareness about Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) remains alarmingly low, the call to inform and educate communities is vital. The Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative is leading this mission, igniting a beacon of hope and knowledge through outreach programs aimed at demystifying SCD, educating on preventive measures, and inspiring young advocates. On February 28, 2024, the Initiative launched its maiden outreach at Estate High School Akobo, Ibadan, bringing SCD education directly to the youth with the hope of instilling awareness that will ripple through families and communities.

Outreach Overview and Team Effort

With a team of committed health professionals and advocates, the outreach brought together key members:

- Dr. Temitope Ogunjimi
- Mr. Tolu Oyewole
- Mr. Aremo John Oluwole
- Mrs. Pelumi Adegbite
- Miss Abiola Olatunji
- Dr. Nimotallah Olajire
- Mr. Emmanuel Dairo

Arriving early in the morning, the team ensured a smooth start, organized activities, and a well-structured schedule that engaged students and staff from start to finish.

The Educational Journey: Raising Awareness and Understanding

The session began with a welcoming address by Mr. Aremo John Oluwole, who outlined the goals and objectives of the program. He stressed the im-

portance of understanding SCD, a condition that often goes misunderstood or undiagnosed until it manifests in severe complications. Each team member brought expertise and passion, contributing to a comprehensive educational session. Dr. Temitope Ogunjimi presented a detailed overview of SCD—its causes, types, symptoms, and potential complications. This was followed by an interactive discussion that helped debunk common myths and misconceptions surrounding SCD, making the complex information accessible and relatable.

Focusing on Prevention and Management

A major component of the session involved preventive measures and management strategies for those affected by SCD.

Emphasis was placed on regular medical check-ups, proper hydration, and awareness of triggers, like extreme temperatures, that could exacerbate SCD symptoms. Students learned the importance of lifestyle choices in managing SCD and were empowered with knowledge on how to support loved ones who might be affected.

Advocacy: Inspiring the Next Generation of SCD Advocates

A key highlight of the outreach was the discussion on advocacy and community awareness, led by Mr. Tolu Oyewole. Students were encouraged to take active roles in spreading knowledge about SCD, emphasizing that awareness can lead to healthier communities. They learned that becoming advocates—no matter how young—could help prevent the spread of the disease and reduce stigma against those affected.

Engaging Students Through Interactive Dialogue

The question-and-answer session was vibrant, as students eagerly engaged with the facilitators, asking thoughtful questions about SCD management and prevention. The facilitators' approachable and insightful responses created an open environment, fostering understanding and curiosity among students. The session wrapped up with Dr. Nimotalah Olajire summarizing key points and thanking the school, speakers, and volunteers, while a vote of thanks was offered by a school prefect.

Feedback and Observations

While the outreach was highly effective, the team noted areas for improvement. A public address system would have made it easier for all students to hear the presentations clearly, and visual aids like cardboard displays could enhance engagement and comprehension among younger audiences. Such observations will guide future outreach events, ensuring that the Initiative's message reaches each participant effectively.

Conclusion:

Sustaining the Beacon of Awareness

The successful outreach at Estate High School Akobo Ibadan marked only the beginning of the Initiative's mission to raise awareness about SCD across schools and communities. The Bunmi Akin-sola Sickle Cell Initiative extends heartfelt gratitude to Estate High School for their cooperation and to the students for their enthusiasm. Yet, the journey is far from over; this beacon of awareness must continue to burn brighter, reaching further into our communities and beyond, with every hand and heart dedicated to supporting individuals with SCD and promoting awareness on a national scale.

Reported by:
Mr Tolulope Oyewole
Volunteer

THE SICKLE CELL WARRIOR

Our Journey of Hope and Help

Introduction

Sickle cell disease (SCD) is a genetic blood disorder that affects millions globally, primarily those of African, Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and Indian descent. This condition, characterized by abnormal hemoglobin, leads to distorted, sickle-shaped red blood cells that can cause severe pain, frequent infections, and serious health complications. Living with SCD is a journey filled with resilience, hope, and the relentless pursuit of better health outcomes. This article chronicles the experiences of individuals living with SCD, highlighting their struggles and triumphs as they navigate this complex condition.



Registration of Beneficiaries at the 2024 Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative World Sickle Cell Day

Understanding Sickle Cell Disease

Sickle cell disease is inherited in an autosomal recessive pattern, meaning that a child must inherit two copies of the sickle cell gene—one from each parent—to develop the disease. Individuals with one copy are carriers (sickle cell trait) and typically do not exhibit symptoms but can pass the gene to their offspring. The symptoms of SCD can vary widely among in-

dividuals and include:

- **Pain Crises:** Sudden episodes of intense pain, often occurring in the chest, abdomen, joints, or bones due to blocked blood flow.
- **Anemia:** Chronic fatigue and weakness resulting from the rapid breakdown of sickle cells.
- **Infections:** Increased susceptibility to infections due to spleen dysfunction.
- **Organ Damage:** Long-term complications affecting various organs, including the lungs, kidneys, and liver.

“For many individuals diagnosed with sickle cell disease, the journey begins in childhood. With the right support and medical care, many learn to navigate their condition favourably. However, this journey is often fraught with challenges.”

Sarah’s Story

Sarah was diagnosed with SCD at birth. Growing up, she faced numerous hospital visits and painful crises that disrupted her education and social life. Despite these obstacles, Sarah found strength in her family and community. Her parents became her advocates, ensuring she received comprehensive care and education about her condition. Sarah’s early experiences were marked by frequent hospitalizations. Each pain crisis would lead to an emergency room visit, where she would receive pain management drugs and hydration procedures. These episodes often left her feeling isolated from her peers. However,

her parents encouraged her to stay engaged in school and activities whenever possible.

Building a Support Network

The importance of a strong support network cannot be overstated. Family, friends, healthcare providers, and support groups play crucial roles in the lives of those living with SCD. Organizations such as the Sick Cell Disease Association of America (SCDAA) provide resources, advocacy, and community support to help warriors like Sarah thrive.

Finding Community

As Sarah grew older, she sought out connections with others who understood her experiences. She joined a local support group for young adults with SCD. Here, she met others who shared similar challenges and triumphs. This connection fostered a sense of belonging and understanding that was instrumental in her emotional well-being. In these meetings, Sarah learned coping strategies from others who had faced similar situations. They shared tips on managing pain, navigating healthcare systems, and advocating for themselves. The support group became a safe space where members could express their fears and celebrate their victories.

Raising Awareness and Advocacy

Awareness is key to improving the lives of those affected by sickle cell disease. Advocacy efforts focus on educating the public about SCD, reducing stigma, and promoting research for better treatments and potential cures.

“Warriors like Sarah often become advocates themselves, sharing their stories to inspire others and raise awareness about the realities of living with SCD.”

Social Media as a Tool for Change

Social media has become a powerful tool for advocacy, allowing individuals to connect globally. Campaigns highlighting “Sickle Cell Warriors” promote understanding and encourage people to share their journeys. By

amplifying their voices, warriors can influence policy changes and improve access to care. Sarah utilized social media platforms to share her story. She posted about her experiences with pain crises, hospital stays, and the importance of regular check-ups. Her candid posts resonated with many, leading to discussions about SCD in online communities. Through her advocacy efforts, Sarah raised awareness about the need for more research funding and better healthcare access for individuals with SCD.



Mrs Adegbite Pelumi presenting welfare package (food, beverage, fruits, and supplements) to a beneficiary

Hope for the Future

While there is currently no universal cure for sickle cell disease, advancements in treatment options are providing hope. Hydroxyurea, a medication that can reduce the frequency of pain crises and improve overall health outcomes, has been a game-changer for many patients. Additionally, gene therapy research is showing promise as a potential cure.

Innovative Treatments

Researchers are exploring various treatment options aimed at addressing the root causes of SCD. Gene therapy holds particular promise; it involves modifying a patient's own cells to produce healthy hemoglobin. Clinical trials are ongoing, and early results are encouraging. Sarah participated in a clinical trial for a new gene therapy treatment. While the process was daunting, she felt hopeful about the potential outcomes. The trial not only offered her a chance at improved health but also allowed her to contribute to research that could benefit future generations.

Coping Strategies for Daily Life

Living with sickle cell disease requires individuals to develop effective coping strategies to manage their symptoms and maintain their quality of life. Here are some approaches that have proven beneficial:

1. Pain Management:

Understanding triggers for pain crises can help individuals take preventive measures. Staying hydrated, avoiding extreme temperatures, and managing stress are essential strategies.

2. Regular Medical Care:

Consistent check-ups with healthcare providers ensure that individuals receive necessary vaccinations and screenings to prevent complications.

3. Healthy Lifestyle Choices:

A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can support overall health. Regular physical activity tailored to one's abilities can also be beneficial.

4. Mental Health Support:

Coping with a chronic illness can take an emotional toll. Seeking therapy or counseling can provide individuals with tools to manage anxiety and depression related to their condition.

5. Education:

Empowering oneself with knowledge about SCD can lead to better self-advocacy during medical visits and improved communication with healthcare providers.

Conclusion

The journey of a sickle cell warrior is one marked by challenges but also by incredible resilience and hope. With the support of families, communities, and ongoing advancements in medical research, individuals living with sickle cell disease can lead fulfilling lives. As we continue to raise awareness and advocate for better care, we honor their strength and determination in the face of adversity.

“Through stories like Sarah’s, we see the power of community and advocacy in transforming lives affected by sickle cell disease.”

Together, we can create a world where every sickle cell warrior has access to the help they need and the hope they deserve. By fostering understanding and supporting research initiatives, we can pave the way for brighter futures for those living with this condition.

Final Thoughts

As we reflect on the journeys of sickle cell warriors around the world, it becomes clear that hope is an essential component of resilience. The fight against sickle cell disease is ongoing; however, with increased awareness, better treatments, and strong community support, we can make significant strides toward improving the lives of those affected by this challenging condition. Let us stand together in solidarity with sickle cell warriors everywhere as we advocate for change and strive for a future free from the burdens of this disease.

Prepared By

Adejumobi Grace Joy

Volunteer

Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative

A CALL FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR THE PREVENTION OF SICKLE CELL DISEASE

Courtesy: Oyo State Ministry of Health

Sickle cell disease is a genetic condition in which an individual's red blood cells contain an abnormal form of hemoglobin. The disease occurs when an individual inherits the sickle cell genes from both parents.

Although sickle cell disease is considered rare, it affects millions of people worldwide, with the highest prevalence in Africa. Many of us living in Nigeria have encountered someone with sickle cell disease (SS genotype) in our lifetime, and many more of us know someone with sickle cell traits living around us.



Mr Aremo John Oluwole teaching the Drivers on the need to teach their children to know their genotype

Sickle cell disease is associated with numerous distressing complications, including anemia, acute and chronic pain, infections, stroke, and diseases of essential organs such as the heart, kidneys, and liver. The disease is also linked to a shorter life expectancy than that of the general population. Even in countries with advanced healthcare systems, such as the United States, the estimated life expectancy of an individual with

sickle cell disease is up to 20 years shorter than the average.

However, sickle cell disease is preventable altogether. The following options could help prevent the disease:

Genetic Counseling

For a child to develop sickle cell disease, they must inherit the sickle cell gene from both parents. Prospective parents need to understand the chances of passing the sickle cell gene to their offspring based on their genetic status, enabling them to make informed decisions. If one parent is AA, there is no chance that a child will inherit the SS gene. However, if both parents have either the sickle cell trait (AS) or sickle cell disease (SS), there is a 25% chance that their offspring could inherit the SS genotype.

“We can all use our various platforms to educate intending couples and prospective parents about this risk. All health service providers, religious leaders, community leaders, and the media should be actively involved in this education.”

Family Planning, Prenatal Screening Options, and Newborn Screening

There are several family planning options for couples at higher risk of having children with sickle cell disease. Additionally, various prenatal screening options are available, though these vary in diagnostic sophistication. They should be consid-

ered wherever available.

Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD), when combined with in vitro fertilization, allows for genetic screening of embryos to identify and prevent the implantation of embryos with sickle cell disease.

Various prenatal screening options, such as Chorionic Villus Sampling, Amniocentesis, and Non-invasive Prenatal Testing, can also help detect sickle cell disease early in pregnancy.

“Newborn screening can help identify sickle cell disease early, enabling timely interventions that significantly reduce the severity of the disease and prevent life-threatening complications.”

Early detection allows for immediate vaccination, prophylactic antibiotics, and early treatments such as regular blood transfusions, pain management, and hydroxyurea therapy. These treatments can reduce the frequency of painful episodes and other complications.



Dr Tomi Tosin-Owojuyigbe (a Volunteer) and Mr Uzor David (President, University College Students Association) at the Alexander Brown Hall during 2024 Blood donation



Beneficiaries taking BMI, A very Important Index in Nutritional Counselling

When detected early, parents of children with sickle cell disease can receive support and education about the disease, its management, and the importance of regular medical care.

Advancements in Treatment and Cure

Significant advancements have been made in bone marrow transplantation as a potential cure for sickle cell disease. Additionally, gene therapy and gene editing offer promising approaches toward a cure and a better quality of life for individuals with sickle cell disease.

Conclusion

Above all, we all owe it to people with sickle cell disease and their families to provide the support needed for a better quality of life. Collective action is essential to prevent the disease, improve outcomes, and support those affected by it.

LIVE INTERVIEW SESSION

With Mrs Blessing Oasyeme

Interviewer: Mr Aremo John

Responder: Mrs Blessing Oasyeme ake

Interviewer: We really want to know you, can you tell us about you and your background

Response: I'm not a Yoruba, I am blessing oasyeme ake. From Benin

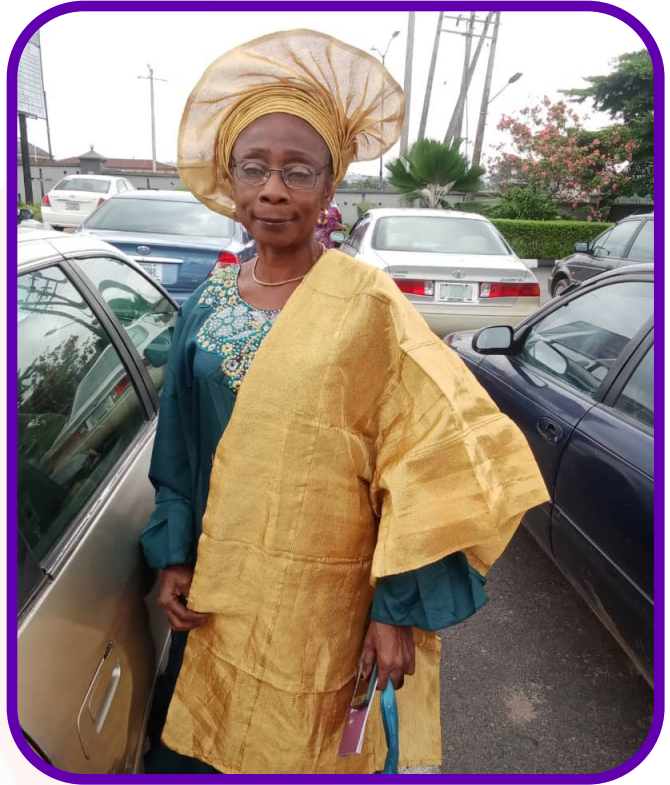
Interviewer: Where in Benin?

Response: I am from Edo state but my Dad is from Onwa local government, I lost my Daddy last year at the age of 98. He was a retired health worker in Jaja clinic University of Ibadan. He retired in 1986 after which, he left for Benin as a retiree. We are three children out of six who have sickle cell disease. My immediate younger brother and his younger sister, I am the eldest of the three of us while the rest of us are all AS.

I am the remaining left of the children who are SS.

Interviewer: So the two (2) are late now, at what age did they die.

Response: The first one was the second to the last born, this happened when he finished his secondary school education in 1998, he had a crisis and was rushed to UCH but did not survive the crisis. While, the second one was the last born, and went to Ekpoma University, he worked as a teacher in Edo Stat. During the 2006 census we lost him, this was due to the stress of the job on him. I thank God for my life, it is not by my own doing but by God's grace and my Dad, he is in the medical line so he really tried for us as B-co, Glucose and all the supplements needed were provided abundantly at home for us which I can say also helped us.

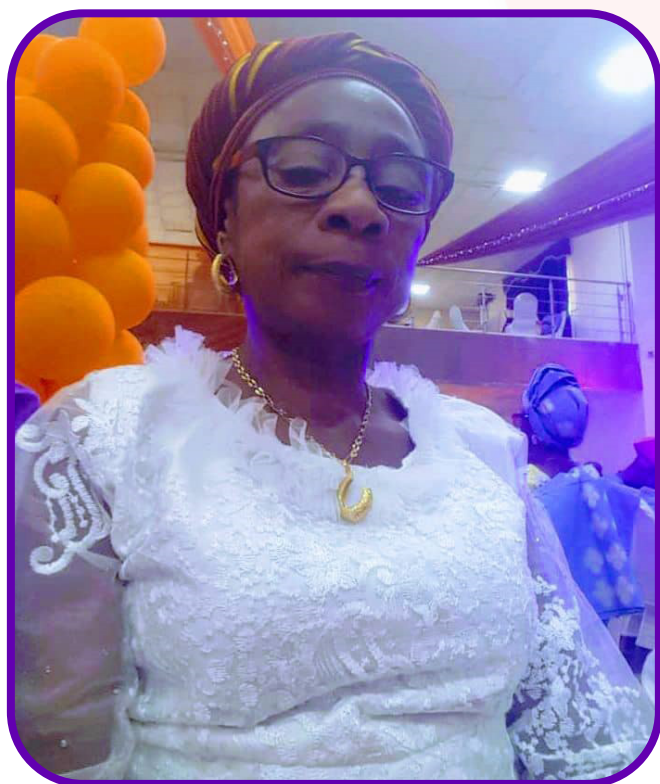


I got married but had delay in conceiving. Eventually when I took in, I had issues in the 5th month of my pregnancy, I had a still birth and due to this heart-breaking event, my first marriage collapsed and I moved on not allowing it to affect me at the time.

My immediate younger brother who is late now, really stood by me during that period and did not allow me feel the weight of the loss. Given the incidence, I had to leave Kaduna to Benin to live with my parents and after sometime I left Benin to Lagos where I worked as a conductress under the Nigerian Labour Congress at the time. I forced myself to do it because I discovered I just love this thing naturally the way the ladies are well organised and I followed them at the time (2002) in Lagos.

"Also I do take a lot of water. I really do not eat much but I drink a lot of water and I do not break down from crisis, if at all maybe once or twice a year and I haven't had blood transfusion until three years ago when I had a crisis and was asked to receive blood which I refused, the doctors said my PCV was low (18). I also love eating pepper soup."

I Just told my sister to help me get pepper soup which is my favourite, so I took pepper soup with malt and after that consumption I slept off and when I woke, my PCV had risen to 20.



Interviewer: What were the condiments' in the pepper soup that makes it work for you

Response: You know from our side we do take it a lot and they have a lot of spices that is used in preparing the pepper soup.

Interviewer: You know in those days there is a way we use native medicine to treat various illness but the challenge was that, it was not document-

ed at the time and from what you are saying now it is obvious that the pepper soup is one of the things that helped to enhance your PCV.

Response: Yes it did, infact I finished it and after I took malt and lots of water which also helped me more stable.

Interviewer: Why I am particular about that the pepper soup is because there are sickle cell persons whom I met and mere looking at them, you discover that their economic power is low and are unable to cater for their basic needs so but I have been thinking and asking around that are there no indigenous food, fruits or spices that when you eat, even if they cannot enhance they can stabilize, and that is why I am particular... I will still make more research on this.

Response: There as a time the crisis was intense after the divorce when I was staying alone in my former husband's house, I stayed there for 2 years. Whenever the crisis came that time, I usually take malt and milk to stablise, but there was this time I took it and it got worse and I had to be admitted into UCH, it was there they discovered that milk is not compatible with my system, and so I was asked to stop taking milk and since then I stopped taking milk because I became allergic to milk. Another thing I did during that time was that whenever the pain become so intense, I inject myself with intravenous (analgene) injection. So I did that till I became so tired of the crisis not until I landed in UCH and they discovered the cause which was the milk I was taking and since I stopped it, then I've been fine.

Interviewer: You have a business that you are managing but have you ever work in a private setting or government work

Response: No, apart from the Labour congress job I did in Lagos.

Interviewer: Why did you leave?

Response: Marriage, because my husband was from Kaduna then and I was in Lagos so I had to leave the work and join him at Kaduna.

Interviewer: I have two (2) questions around that. When you were working with them at the congress in Lagos, was there any form of stigmatization around your work or did you have any crisis around that time.

Response: I do have crises, and you know, my eyes are usually yellow so my colleagues usually ask almost all the time if I was fine and I'd just shrug, telling them to leave me alone that I am fine.

I was feeling uncomfortable so I just wave them off and move on and I did not tell anyone then that I was SS. There were times when I tell confidants, they are usually surprised because they tell me I don't look like I'm SS.

Interviewer: I think many thanks to your Dad, and additionally to the previous question. I wanted to ask that did your husband notice it, did you do medical tests.

Response: We did tests and I also told him and even his parents knew about it, as we are from the same village and he is AA

Interviewer: So the main challenge for the marriage was the conception, still birth?

Response: Yes, because for the first pregnancy I was very sick that I had to leave Kaduna to Benin and that was when I gave birth to still birth and the second one I had complication so they had to do evacuation, and since the evacuation I had not taken in.

Interviewer: Can you tell us your age ma?

Response: I was born August 21st 1968

Interviewer: So in the next 4 years now you will be celebrating your 60th birthday, the Lord will spare your life, the lord will strengthen you and the Lord will bless you, Amen.

This current generation of Gen z and the mental health of living with sickle cell, how did you man-

age yours.

Response: For me, I don't see myself as a person with sickle cell disease, so I don't live in the reality of that consciousness. I do go to Cotonou to buy things and I know how I manage myself so I don't overstress myself and I don't force myself by competing with others, I go at my pace.

Interviewer: Hmm true, I knew a lady back in school then... someone just told me that the way this sister is treating herself, she'd die soon because she engages in activities that is way above her capacity as a person living with sickle cell disease, she has 3 to 4 boyfriends... so I said when next I see her I will talk to her but the next time I hoped to see her, I was told she was already dead due to an abortion issue.

Response:and sometimes I engage in things that makes me happy naturally for example, I rear chickens and I most times I sit near them just to enjoy the view which gives me happiness.

Interviewer: So how did you meet Daddy (Your current Husband)

Response: We bless God. Thank God it happened that his wife travelled out and most of his children are outside the country, so one of my friends introduced me to him and upon meeting him we had agreements on our conditions and everything is going on well since then which has been 8 years ago now and even his mother is also still alive now at 98, we thank God.

Interviewer: You said you have not been living conscious of being sickle cell patient, not putting that stigma on yourself

Response: Yes, even in terms of having child, I did not bother brooding about it knowing about the complications of child birth and moreover my younger sister has children and I take them as my own children also and I have been able to build a family for myself with people around me especially my immediate sibling's children.

Interviewer: We thank God. God has really helped you. This leads me to ask that between the

time that you were staying alone and the time you met daddy, how was your social life then and how were you able to handle pressure around peers and people.

Response: While I was staying alone, I don't use to listen to what people say, even one of my immediate brother gave conditions for him to help me and I told him I do not need any help and whatever God will do he will do it by himself and that was my stand and I faced my work. Also I had only one man with whom we go out most times together back from shop then. I took my business (shop) serious and I had young children as my close friends then and they also looked out for me and I give them advise and they stand by me and by that means I had a support system. So I did not give myself unnecessary stress thinking about things that will affect me.

Interviewer: I think this will be a word of knowledge to people that are growing, I remember one of our beneficiary who has not been able to face her life and I discovered that it is when you face your life that things you want will present itself to you. There should be something you have that adds value to you and people can see the impact. What are some strategies you use as regards to food that helps you maintains your health?

Response: Alright, I eat varieties of vegetables and I eat little but consistently. I also eat beans very well, there is no day we don't eat beans in our house in its various forms. I also eat eggs every day. I also take a lot of water and I avoid carbonated drinks

Interviewer: I can see it shows on your skin. What advice will you give young parents who are dealing children that have sickle cell disease.

Response: I will advise against self-medication for young parents, for example in my case it was when I was rushed to UCH that the doctors discovered that I was allergic to milk and so this is to encourage young

parents to ensure to find the cause that triggers their children crisis and seek appropriate medical consultation and advice so as to protect the lives of their children.

I will also advise they give them lots of glucose

Interviewer: What are your thoughts about the level of awareness for sickle cell in Nigeria now?

Response: We are trying, the level of awareness is increasing out there now, and as you can see even churches ensures couples do their genotype test before getting engaged and it is even already a general knowledge now that everyone should know their genotype so as to avoid giving birth to children with sickle cell and prevent the repetition of the mistakes our old parents made in their time when the awareness was low.



Interviewer: Have you participated in any advocacy before now

Response: No

Interviewer: What do you think organizations like BASC Initiative can do to improve the lives of

people living with sickle cell disease?

Response: I think as you have said about working towards getting a specialized hospital for sickle cell so I believe once that comes to fruition, it will also give specialized medical care access to sickle cell patients where they can be well taken care of promptly.

Interviewer: How did you hear about BASC Initiative?

Response: I think it was daddy who heard about it on the radio and he insisted that we join and since then we have been part of the organization

Interviewer: One of our goals is that we can get to a point where there is no sickle cell disease again and this is dependent on our level of advocacy and awareness program

Also, for example if we are going to write a grant, they would like to know who we are and who are the trustees behind the organization, so that we can get access to funds for their care. We also want to see that we are able to do bone marrow transplant once a year but we do not have that financial capacity now. What we are able to do now is basic care. We know that we cannot do it on our own, we need to depend on people's experience.

Interviewer: To ask Daddy... what has been your experience with her

Response: I can say she is very hardworking; she works from morning to evening although in the compound and she is very strong even stronger than me both in heart and act. She also manages herself very well, she has studied her body to know when the crisis comes knocking and she manages it well by taking lots of water in a still position with malt until the pain goes down, she also drives long distances which shows her resilience.

Interviewer: Is there any other suggestion you have for BASC initiative

Response: I want to say that, you should be checking on the people in your care consistently to know how they are faring and what they are passing through for instance twice a month

Interviewer: Thank you so much we will be sure to implement as you have suggested, we really appreciate your coming and do not take it for granted. God will bless you and grant you journey mercy in Jesus name, AMEN.

COURTESY VISIT



Courtesy Visit to the Honourable Commissioner of Health, Oyo State.

On March 20, the Bunmi Akinsola Sick Cell Initiative (BASCI) had the privilege of meeting with the Honourable Commissioner for Health, Oyo State, Dr. Ajetunmobi, to explore collaboration opportunities. The BASCI delegation, consisting of Dr. Temitope Ogunjimi, Mrs. Adegbite Pelumi, Mr. Toluwani Oyewole, and Mr. Aremo John Oluwole, arrived at the Commissioner's office at approximately 2:00 p.m. The team was warmly received by both the Honourable Commissioner and the Permanent Secretary, Dr. Ayinde, setting a welcoming tone for a productive discussion.

Dr. Ajetunmobi expressed keen interest in BASCI's mission, activities, and future goals, highlighting her genuine enthusiasm for how the Ini-

tiative could positively impact sickle cell care in Oyo State. She underscored the importance of sustainable healthcare for individuals affected by sickle cell disease (SCD) and encouraged BASCI to leverage the state's health insurance scheme to support its beneficiaries. This initiative, she explained, would make critical care more accessible to those living with SCD, a condition that often imposes significant financial burdens on families.

The Honourable Commissioner further advised BASCI to submit a formal proposal outlining its mission, vision, and specific requests for support. She suggested that the proposal include an appeal for introductions to the state's Ministry of Education and key community leaders in both urban and rural areas, which would be

instrumental in expanding BASCI's outreach programs. Additionally, she recommended securing ethical approval to streamline the Initiative's genotype testing efforts, ensuring compliance and minimizing administrative challenges.

During the discussion, Dr. Ajetunmobi emphasized the value of partnerships with established organizations focused on SCD. She specifically recommended Chrisbol Medical Hospital in Akobo, home to the Champions Sick Cell Club, as a potential ally. Collaborative efforts with such organizations, she noted, would amplify BASCI's impact and create a robust network of support and advocacy for sickle cell patients throughout Oyo State.

Mr. Aremo John Oluwole, the Administrative Head of BASCI, shared the personal story behind the Initiative's founding. He recounted that BASCI was inspired by the loss of Bunmi Akinsola, a vibrant young woman from Ibadan North East Local Government who succumbed to a sickle cell crisis. Her untimely death underscored the urgent need for accessible medical and psychological support for individuals living with SCD—support that BASCI now aims to provide across Oyo State and beyond.

Mr. Oluwole also outlined BASCI's long-term vision to significantly reduce sickle cell mortality in Oyo State and across Nigeria. The Initiative is

committed to raising awareness and improving access to essential services for SCD patients, regardless of age, religion, or ethnicity. With a goal of achieving this vision within the next 20 years, BASCI is determined to expand its outreach programs, enhance awareness campaigns, and collaborate with other health organizations to improve the quality of life for sickle cell patients.

The Honourable Commissioner commended BASCI's dedication and the importance of its mission. She assured the team of her commitment to supporting the Initiative in achieving its goals and reiterated her belief in the power of partnerships to drive meaningful change. Her vote of confidence further motivated the BASCI team as they continue their efforts to make a lasting impact on the lives of sickle cell patients in Oyo State.

To commemorate the visit and express appreciation for the Commissioner's support, Mrs. Adegbite Pelumi presented Dr. Ajetunmobi with a BASCI-branded souvenir, including a T-shirt. This gesture symbolized the Initiative's gratitude for the warm reception and encouragement from the Commissioner and her team. The visit marks a pivotal moment in BASCI's journey, strengthening its network and opening doors to impactful collaborations that promise to advance the fight against sickle cell disease in Oyo State.



L-R: Mrs Adegbite, (BASC Initiative Desk Officer), Dr Kehinde Ayinde, (Permanent Secretary Oyo State Ministry of Health), Dr Oluwaseyemi Ajetunmobi (Honourable Commissioner of Health Oyo State), Mr Aremo John Oluwole, (Administrative Head BASC Initiative), Dr Temitope Ogunjimi, (Medical Director, BASC Initiative), Mr Tolu Oyewole, (Volunteer, BASC Initiative).

BLOOD DONATION DRIVE



Tackling Sickle Cell Disease Mortality through Blood Donation: Commemorating 2024 World Sickle Cell Day

Sickle cell disease (SCD) remains a global health challenge, claiming thousands of lives annually, with many deaths linked to complications arising from low hemoglobin levels. For individuals with SCD, low hemoglobin significantly increases the risk of severe health issues, including stroke, organ damage, and early mortality. Global estimates from 2021 revealed approximately 34,400 deaths directly caused by SCD. However, when indirect factors, such as complications from low hemoglobin, are considered, this figure rises dramatically, with an estimated 376,000 deaths annually. In sub-Saharan Africa, where access to healthcare is limited, children under five are particularly vulnerable, accounting for an estimated 81,100 child deaths each year. Research highlights the impact of even slight

improvements in hemoglobin levels on SCD outcomes. A hemoglobin increase of just 1 g/dL is associated with a 64% reduction in mortality risk for SCD patients, emphasizing the critical importance of addressing anemia to improve survival rates. In recognition of this, the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative partnered with the National Blood Service Commission's Southwest Zonal Office, the University College Students Association, and the Nigerian Red Cross UCH detachment to organize a blood donation drive on June 22, 2024, at Alexander Brown Hall, University College Hospital, Ibadan, as part of the 2024 World Sickle Cell Day commemoration.

The blood donation drive saw enthusiastic participation, with 39 volunteers stepping forward to donate blood. After thorough screening, 25 volunteers

were deemed eligible to donate. These contributions are invaluable for addressing the blood needs of SCD patients, who often require transfusions to manage anemia and prevent life-threatening complications. The event was a collaborative effort led by key figures, including Dr. Temitope Ogunjimi, Medical Director of the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative, Dr. Tomisin (Media Director), and Dr. Aremo Adenike-Adeniyi (Research Director), along with dedicated medical professionals and volunteers from each collaborating organization.



Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative 2024 Blood Donation at Alexander Brown Hall, University College Hospital Ibadan.

Significant support for the event was also provided by Alexander Brown Hall executives, the University College Students Association, and representatives from the National Blood Service Commission. Special guests, such as Mrs. Stella from Chrisbol Champions Club, further underscored the strong community backing for this critical health initiative. This collective support reflects growing awareness of SCD's impact and the need for communal efforts to address its challenges.

As a token of appreciation, all volunteers received custom notebooks and pens, while the first ten donors and key event organizers were gifted customized T-shirts to recognize their dedication. Such gestures reinforce the importance of volunteer involvement and high-

light the compassion that drives these life-saving campaigns. Through initiatives like this, the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative seeks to foster a culture of awareness and proactive support for SCD patients within the community.

After collection, the 25 pints of blood were screened by the National Blood Service Commission and confirmed to be free of transfusion-transmissible infections (TTIs). These pints now contribute to a critical blood reserve, ensuring a safe supply for SCD patients in need. Blood shortages can be devastating for SCD patients, especially during acute crises, making this resource indispensable for timely interventions.

"This blood reserve is now available to SCD patients, particularly beneficiaries of the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative and warriors from other SCD support organizations."

The blood can be accessed at a subsidized screening fee, ensuring affordability and accessibility. Patients only need to present their blood group to the National Blood Service Commission to utilize the service. This resource will undoubtedly save lives by supporting those with low hemoglobin who might otherwise face fatal complications.

Through initiatives like this blood donation drive, the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative not only provides practical support to SCD patients but also raises awareness about the disease and the importance of regular blood donation. The event's success highlights the collective power of community and collaboration in tackling health challenges and reaffirms the commitment to improving the quality of life for SCD patients.

THE STRATEGIC LOCATION

Importance of Ojoo Bus Terminal in Sickle Cell Awareness Campaign

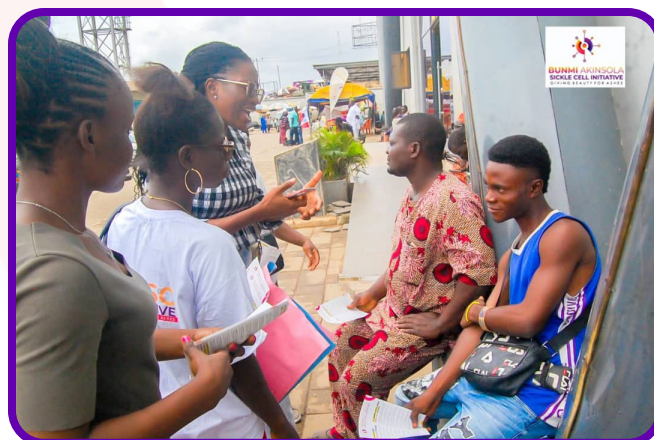
In the quest to reduce the occurrence of sickle cell births and ultimately achieve zero sickle cell births, the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative (BASCI) embarked on a community awareness campaign at one of the busiest and most strategic locations in Ibadan, the capital city of Oyo State—Ojoo Bus Terminal. This landmark event took place on the 7th of September, 2023, from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM, with the terminal serving as the perfect platform to educate a diverse range of people about the importance of knowing one's genotype.

Ojoo Bus Terminal, one of the busiest transportation hubs in Ibadan, stands as an ideal location for this type of awareness campaign. The terminal connects Ibadan to major cities within Oyo State and beyond, including other states in Nigeria such as Kano, Kaduna, Sokoto, Niger, and Zamfara. The strategic positioning of this terminal ensures that it caters to thousands of passengers daily, offering a unique opportunity to reach a large and diverse audience. This is particularly significant for spreading awareness about sickle cell and genotype testing, especially to travelers who may not be aware of their genotype status.

Upon arrival, Mr. Gbade, the Ojoo Bus Terminal manager, warmly welcomed the BASCI team. His prompt response to the initiative's request, having received the letter of interest beforehand, demonstrated the terminal's commitment to supporting community outreach programs. He facilitated the event by assigning a security guard for assistance and designating a serene spot for the team to set up their canopy, ensuring that the event ran smoothly.

The volunteers from BASCI, including Dr. Mrs.

Aremo Adenike-Adeniyi, Mrs. Adegbite Pelumi, and others, divided into teams of three, each responsible for engaging different groups of people within the terminal. They used a Bluetooth speaker to play pre-recorded jingles in Yoruba, educating passengers about the importance of genotype testing and sickle cell awareness. The message was also disseminated through flyers that highlighted both myths and facts about sickle cell disease, written in English, Yoruba, and Hausa languages to reach a wider audience.



BASCI Initiative Volunteers Enlightening Commercial Drivers at the Ojoo Bus Terminal

The team made sure to visit every corner of the terminal, engaging passengers sitting inside the terminal hall and awaiting boarding to various destinations, including both local and inter-state travelers. The passengers traveling to northern states such as Kano, Kaduna, Sokoto, Niger, and Zamfara were specifically targeted, as they represented diverse regions and cultures. This allowed the team to spread awareness to individuals who may not have been familiar with the importance of knowing their genotype.

Additionally, the volunteers reached out to passengers sitting in buses outside the terminal, awaiting their departure. They also visited the arrivals terminus to engage passengers coming down from vehicles traveling from other towns such as Ogbomoso, Oyo Town, Iseyin, Ilorin, Offa, Shaki, Eruwa, and many more. The aim was to ensure that the awareness campaign reached as many people as possible, regardless of their point of entry or departure.



Dr Mrs Aremo Adenike-Adeniyi Evely Enlightening people at the Ojoo Bus Terminal

The volunteers were energetic and undeterred by the rain showers that poured throughout the day. Despite the adverse weather conditions, they continued to distribute flyers and deliver their message in batches, ensuring that everyone in the Ojoo Bus Terminal had the opportunity to learn about the signs and symptoms of sickle cell disease, as well as the importance of genotype testing for early detection and prevention. The volunteers' enthusiasm and commitment were contagious, and the passengers received the message with great interest.

The campaign also provided an opportunity for the volunteers to educate passengers about the proper care and treatment for individuals living with sickle cell disease. Many passengers were unaware of their genotype status, and the campaign helped them understand how to prevent passing on the sickle cell gene to future generations. The outreach was not only informative but also an opportunity for the community to bond over a shared goal of reducing sickle cell births.

The success of the event was a testament to the effectiveness of the team's efforts. Hundreds of people were educated on the importance of knowing their genotype, and many expressed gratitude for the opportunity to learn more about sickle cell disease. The campaign not only raised awareness about the disease but also encouraged individuals to take proactive steps toward preventing sickle cell births.

A special thank you is extended to all the volunteers who dedicated their time and effort to make the event a success. Their involvement and hard work made the awareness campaign at Ojoo Bus Terminal possible. Volunteers such as Dr. Mrs. Aremo Adenike-Adeniyi, Mrs. Adegbite Pelumi, Miss Ayanfe Ayanwusi, Miss Blessing Makinde, Miss Olubolade Opemipo, Miss Sogbesan Moyosore, and Mr. Adeniyi Adesola from The Genowise Project played an integral role in reaching out to passengers and spreading the critical message.

The campaign at Ojoo Bus Terminal was more than just an educational event; it was a call to action for the community. By educating people about sickle cell and the importance of knowing their genotype, the initiative empowered individuals to make informed decisions about their health.

The success of the event demonstrated that awareness campaigns, especially in strategic locations such as bus terminals, have the potential to reach and educate thousands of people from different walks of life.

Through such outreach programs, the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative aims to achieve its long-term goal of reducing sickle cell births to zero. The awareness campaign at Ojoo Bus Terminal is just one step in a larger, ongoing effort to educate the public and encourage people to take charge of their health by knowing their genotype.

The impact of this event cannot be overstated. It reached hundreds of people who may not have otherwise had access to such important information about sickle cell disease. The campaign

fostered a sense of responsibility within the community, encouraging individuals to prioritize their health and make informed choices for themselves and their future families.

With the continued support of the public and dedicated volunteers, initiatives like the one at Ojoo Bus Terminal can help create a brighter, healthier future for generations to come. By spreading knowledge about sickle cell disease and genotype testing, BASCI is contributing to a significant cause that has the potential to save countless

lives and reduce the burden of sickle cell disease in Nigeria and beyond. Together, we can achieve a zero sickle cell birth rate and create a healthier, more informed society.



Miss Sogbesan Moyosore and Miss Abigael Makinde speaking with traders at the bus terminal

EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION



Early Health Education and Sickle Cell Awareness in Schools: Sickle cell awareness outreach program at Ikolaba Grammar School I, Agodi GRA, Ibadan.

By 2030, it is estimated that over 400,000 babies will be born annually with sickle cell disease (SCD) worldwide, the majority in sub-Saharan Africa. This alarming projection underscores the urgent need for health education to combat the spread of this genetic disorder. On October 17, 2024, the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative took a bold step in this direction by organizing a sickle cell awareness outreach program at Ikolaba Grammar School I, Agodi GRA, Ibadan. The program epitomized the transformative power of early health education in shaping healthy, resilient lives.

Why Early Health Education Matters

Health education plays a crucial role in equipping young people with the knowledge and skills to make informed choices about their health. When initiated early, it fosters resilience, builds a foundation for academic and social success, and helps children form positive relationships. It also significantly reduces risky behaviors by encouraging preventive practices. For conditions like sickle cell disease—a genetic blood disorder that affects millions globally—early awareness can save lives. By educating young minds about the importance of genotype compatibility, genetic counseling, and medical support, we empower a generation to prevent the challenges posed by SCD.

The Outreach: Educating Young Minds

On the day of the outreach, the Initiative's team—comprising Mr. John Oluwole Aremo, Mrs. Pelumi Adegbite, and Miss Opemipo Olubolade—was warmly received by the school principal, Mr. J. O. Ojedirán, and vice principal, Mrs. O. O. Ogunnaike. A total of 985 students (500 males and 485 females) were present, their eager faces reflecting the significance of the event.



Mr. Aremo led the session with a compelling lecture that delved into critical topics:

1. What is Sickle Cell Disease (SCD)?

Mr. Aremo began by explaining that SCD is a hereditary blood disorder caused by the mutation of the hemoglobin gene. Hemoglobin, the oxygen-carrying molecule in the blood, forms abnormally in individuals with SCD, causing red blood cells to assume a crescent or “sickle” shape. This deformation leads to blockages in blood vessels, causing severe pain, organ damage, and complications such as stroke and infections.

2. How is SCD Inherited?

Using a clear and engaging schematic diagram, Mr. Aremo illustrated how genetic combinations influence a child's genotype. He explained the outcomes of different pairings, such as AA, AS, SS, AC, and SC, emphasizing that a child

inherits one hemoglobin gene from each parent. He differentiated between sickle cell disease patients (SS or SC genotypes) and carriers (AS or AC genotypes), highlighting the significance of genotype testing before marriage.

3. Symptoms and Complications of SCD

Symptoms such as fatigue, jaundice, severe pain episodes, and delayed growth were discussed. Mr. Aremo also shed light on complications like anemia, organ damage, and stroke, stressing the importance of early diagnosis and medical intervention.

4. Prevention and Management

Prevention strategies like genetic counseling, prenatal testing, and informed marital choices were emphasized. Furthermore, Mr. Aremo provided insights into managing SCD, including proper hydration, pain management, regular check-ups, and vaccinations. He also discussed the Initiative's medical and psychological support programs for individuals living with SCD.

Engagement and Resource Distribution
The session was interactive and informative, allowing students to raise questions and voice concerns. Many were curious about how to access genotype testing and support services for individuals with SCD. The team distributed brochures and pamphlets containing detailed information about SCD, ensuring that students and teachers had resources for further learning.

Volunteer Dedication

The outreach program was a success, thanks to the unwavering commitment of the Initiative's volunteers. Mr. Aremo, Mrs. Adegbite, and Miss Olubolade worked tirelessly to ensure the program's objectives were met. Their passion and expertise resonated with both students and staff, leaving an indelible mark.

Acknowledgment from the School

The school principal, Mr. Ojedirán expressed his gratitude for the Initiative's effort. He acknowledged the importance of raising awareness about SCD and commended the team for its dedication to health education. “This program has opened our eyes to the significance of knowing our genotype and the steps we can take to prevent sickle cell disease. It's a valuable

lesson for everyone,” remarked Mr. Ojediran.

A Call to Action: Sustaining the Momentum

The success of the Ikolaba Grammar School outreach reflects the potential of early health education to create lasting change.

However, this is just the beginning. The Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative is committed to replicating this success in schools and communities across Nigeria. By prioritizing awareness and early intervention, we can reduce the prevalence of SCD and improve the quality of life for those affected.

The Broader Implications of Genotype Awareness

Beyond individual well-being, genotype awareness has profound social and economic implications. In Nigeria, where one in four people is a sickle cell carrier, the burden on healthcare systems is immense. By preventing SCD through informed choices, families can avoid the emotional and financial strain associated with managing the disease. Moreover, a healthier population contributes to national development, highlighting the ripple effect of such educational initiatives.

Future Plans for Health Education

The Initiative aims to expand its reach through partnerships with schools, community organizations,

and healthcare providers. Plans include organizing free genotype testing campaigns, training volunteers to conduct awareness programs, and developing digital resources for wider accessibility. Additionally, integrating health education into school curricula will ensure sustained impact, equipping future generations with essential knowledge.

Conclusion: A Healthier Future Begins Today
The Ikolaba Grammar School outreach program exemplifies the transformative power of early health education. By addressing SCD at its roots—through awareness, prevention, and support—the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative is paving the way for a healthier, more informed society. As we look to the future, let us remember that knowledge is not just power; it is a tool for survival. Together, we can empower our children to live healthy, resilient lives, free from the preventable challenges of sickle cell disease.

“A healthy society begins with informed choices. Let us invest in health education today for a brighter, healthier tomorrow.”

*Prepared by
Olubolade Opemipo
Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative
Volunteer*



Mr Aremo John Oluwale and Mrs Adegbite Pelumi at the “Know your genotype campaign” at Ikolaba Grammar School Agodi GRA Ibadan North Local Government Ibadan Oyo State Nigeria

PHOTO GALLERY



Our Beneficiary,
Mr Gbadebo at the Launching



A beneficiary:
Mr Adedoyin at the Launching



Cross section of Parents and
Beneficiaries at the Launching



Mr Aremo John Oluwole the Administra-
tive Head at the Initiative's maiden Know
your genotype campaign at Estate High
School Akobo, Lagelu Local Government,
Ibadan Oyo State Nigeria



Cross section of Estate High School
Students



BASC Initiative volunteers and the
teachers of Kingdom Advancement
College, Akobo Ibadan Oyo State Ni-
geria



BASC Initiative Volunteers and the
teachers of St Patrick's Secondary
School Basorun Ibadan, Ibadan North
Local Government Ibadan Oyo State



Dr Temitope Ogunjimi
answering questions at St Patrick's
Secondary School Basorun Ibadan



Mr Aremo John Oluwole delivery lecture
at St Patrick's Secondary School Bas-
orun Ibadan

PHOTO GALLERY



Courtesy visit to the honourable commissioner for health Oyo State.



BASC Initiative volunteers and Teachers of Ikolaba High School



Dr Titi Ishola, and Mr Tolulope Oyewole (Volunteers) and BASC Initiative Desk Officer: Mrs Adegbite Pelumi, Administrative Head: Mr Aremo John Oluwole together with the students of Bishop Philips Academy, Iwo Road, Egbeda Local Government Ibadan, Oyo State.



Mrs Adegbite Pelumi and Mr Aremo John Oluwole educating the Teachers and Students of Loyola College Ibadan



Volunteers, Beneficiaries and parents together with Basc Initiative Management at the Health talk



Dr Mrs Adeoye Yemisi (a Volunteer) asking question at the Health talk program



R-L: Mr Aremo John Oluwole (Administrative Head, BASC Initiative). Miss Olubolade Opemipo (Volunteer). Miss Abigail Makinde (volunteer). Miss Sogbesan Moyosore (Volunteer). Miss Ayanwusi Omolola (Volunteer) Mr Adeniyi Adesola (The Genowise Project) at the know your genotype community awareness Ojoo Bus Terminal.



Dr Mrs-Aremo talking to a buss passenger at the Campaign



Mrs Blessing oasoyeme (A warrior) And Chief Abisipo Ogunkeyede at the Health talk

PHOTO GALLERY



Mr Tolulope Oyewole (volunteer) at the interactive session



Dr Tomi Tosin-Owojuyigbe, a volunteer and Master of Ceremonny for the Symposium



Nrs Deborah Awoleye (volunteer) during interactive session at the symposium



Miss Ifeoluwa Mosunmade at the Symposium



Our resource persons Sr offor Augustine from Justice Development and Peace commission, Ibadan and Miss Ayanwusi Omolola from the Department of Social work University of Ibadan



Our Esteemed Volunteers (L-R: Dr Temitope Ogunjimi, Mrs Deborah Akinwande, Dr Aremo Adenike-Adeniyi, Dr Nimotallah Olajire, Mrs Tomi Philips, Dr Tomi Tosin-Owojuyigbe, Miss Moyosore Sogbesan, Mr Aremo John Oluwole, Mrs Adegbite Pelumi and Dr Adeoye Yemisi at the Blood Donation drive



Mrs Adegbite Pelumi and Miss Ayanwusi Omolola at the campaign



Mrs Adegbite Pelumi talking to a bus driver



L-R: Dr Mrs Adeoye Yemisi (volunteer), Mrs -----Mrs Adegbite Pelumi Volunteer) Dietitian Olubunmi Ojo (Resource Person), Dr Temitope Ogunjimi (Medical Director BASC Initiative) Miss Amaechi Deborah (volunteer)

GENOTYPE AWARENESS



Sickle Cell Education and Empowerment at Ikolaba High School

In the effort to reduce the sickle cell burden in Nigeria, educating young people about their genetic status is crucial. Secondary school students, especially in Oyo State, are at a formative age for genetic education, as they are starting to make independent choices and, in many cases, are unaware of their genotype. A sustained campaign on genotype awareness could significantly lower sickle cell transmission rates over time, fostering a healthier future generation.

Recognizing this, the outreach team from the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative (BASC Initiative) visited Ikolaba High School, Iwo Road, on July 4, 2024. The team was comprised of Mr. John Aremo, the Administrative Head of BASC Initiative,

along with dedicated volunteers Miss Ajetunmobi Joy, Miss Opemipo Olubolade, and Dr. Yemisi D. Adeoye. The program was scheduled to start at 8:00 AM and concluded successfully at 8:55 AM.

Arrival and Reception

The team arrived between 7:45 and 8:00 AM and was warmly received by Mrs. Yakubu, the Vice Principal in charge of Co-Curricular Activities. After meeting some of the teachers and the head of the school, they prepared to deliver an impactful presentation designed to engage both students and teachers, offering valuable insights into sickle cell disease (SCD) and its management.

The Talk: Understanding and Managing Sickle Cell Disease

Mr. John Aremo opened the “Know your genotype campaign”. Through an engaging presentation supported by visual aids, he conveyed essential knowledge about sickle cell disease to the attentive audience.

The talk covered:

1. Understanding SCD

Mr. Aremo explained the basics of SCD, discussing what it is, its causes, and the different types. He then moved to the symptoms and complications associated with the disease, giving students a clear understanding of its effects.

2. Interactive Discussion and Dispelling Myths

Following the foundational information, he encouraged an open discussion to address common misconceptions. This interactive segment allowed students to ask questions and clarify doubts, ensuring they walked away with accurate knowledge.

3. Prevention and Management Strategies

The presentation also emphasized preventive measures and management strategies essential for those affected by SCD. Mr. Aremo highlighted the importance of regular medical check-ups, hydration, balanced nutrition, and pain management. He also discussed triggers to avoid, such as extreme temperatures and dehydration, to help manage symptoms.

4. Lifestyle and Well-being

Through a hands-on workshop, Mr. Aremo stressed the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including physical activity, stress management, and community support. He engaged students with group activities and role-playing scenarios that reinforced these concepts, empowering them to make positive lifestyle choices.



The cross section of Students of Ikolaba High School

Question-and-Answer Session and Student Engagement

Following Mr. Aremo’s presentation, Miss Ajetunmobi Joy led an interactive Q&A session. Students actively participated, showing keen interest and understanding. Many were eager to answer questions, and those who responded correctly were rewarded with small gifts, creating an atmosphere of excitement and further reinforcing the key messages of the talk.

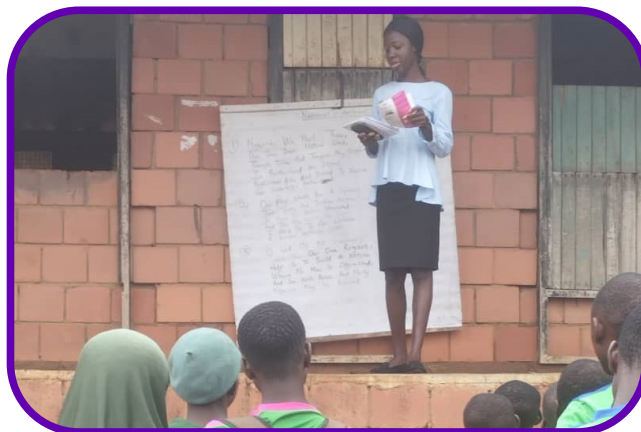
Miss Ajetunmobi then offered a summary of the main takeaways from the session, encouraging students to continue learning about SCD and to spread awareness within their communities. Her words resonated strongly with the students, who were inspired to share the knowledge with family and friends, becoming advocates for sickle cell awareness.

Community Impact and Future Plans

As the session concluded, gifts and souvenirs were presented to the school administration, including the head of the school and the vice principals, as a token of appreciation. Group photos were taken with teachers and student representatives, capturing a memorable moment that celebrated the success of the campaign.

A significant highlight was when a teacher, Mr. Akeem, identified a student living with sickle cell. This student was documented to be enrolled as one of BASC Initiative's beneficiaries in the coming year, extending vital support to those in need.

By targeting young individuals, the campaign aims to equip them with the necessary knowledge about genotype compatibility and the risks associated with inheriting the sickle cell trait. Early awareness of one's genotype encourages informed choices regarding marriage and family planning, ultimately reducing the prevalence of SCD in future generations.



Miss Adejumobi Joy during question and answer session at Ikolaba High School, Ikolaba GRA Ibadan North Local Government, Ibadan Oyo State

Conclusion

The health discussion with the students and teachers at Ikolaba High School was highly successful, imparting critical information about sickle cell disease and empowering participants with knowledge and resources. Through this program, the BASC Initiative reinforced its commitment to combating sickle cell disease in Nigeria, one school and one community at a time.

The event concluded at 8:55 AM, leaving a lasting impact on all who attended.

Report by:

Dr. Yemisi Adeoye

BASC Initiative Outreach Team Volunteer

OUTREACH TO RIVERSIDE VICTORY CENTER: A Milestone in Sickle Cell Awareness

On March 10, 2024, the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative (BASCI) took its awareness campaign to Riverside Victory Christian Centre, marking another milestone in its commitment to fighting sickle cell disease (SCD) through education, advocacy, and support. The outreach was spearheaded by a passionate and dedicated team comprising Mr. Toluwani Oyewole, Dr. Mrs. Adenike-Adeniyi Aremo, and Mr. John Oluwole Aremo. This event underscored the Initiative's unwavering mission to transform lives and foster informed decision-making within communities.

Setting the Stage: The Call for Knowledge

The outreach program began with a thought-provoking session led by Mr. John Oluwole Aremo. Drawing inspiration from 2 Peter 1:5, he reminded the congregation of the biblical exhortation to supplement virtue with knowledge. His message resonated deeply, emphasizing that understanding the dynamics of sickle cell disease was not just a medical necessity but a spiritual and moral imperative for believers seeking to lead purposeful lives.

Mr. Aremo detailed the objectives of the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative, which include managing sickle cell crises and preventing their occurrence through education. He highlighted the relevance of this mission in a country like Nigeria, where the prevalence of SCD remains alarmingly high.

"With an estimated 150,000 babies born annually with sickle cell disease in Nigeria alone, raising awareness is crucial to reducing the societal and familial burden of this condition."

Unpacking Sickle Cell Disease: Insights and Prevention

Mr. Aremo provided an engaging and simplified explanation of SCD, tracing its roots to hemoglobin—the protein responsible for transporting oxygen in the blood. He elaborated on the genetic basis of the disease, focusing on the three key genotypes: AA (normal), AS (carrier), and SS (sickle cell). His explanation illuminated the challenges faced by individuals with the SS genotype, including reduced life expectancy and recurrent health crises caused by sickle-shaped red blood cells.

In his discourse, Mr. Aremo emphasized prevention as the cornerstone of managing the disease. He passionately advocated for genotype testing, urging individuals to "know their genotype" before making critical decisions, particularly in marriage.

By incorporating genotype testing into the church's marriage counseling program, he argued, congregations could help prevent future cases of sickle cell disease while fostering healthier families.

Bridging Science and Faith

The Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative recognizes that education alone is not enough. It must be complemented by a compassionate understanding of the socio-cultural and emotional dimensions of the disease. This approach was evident in the seamless integration of faith-based values into the outreach session. By framing scientific discussions within the context of Christian teachings, the team successfully bridged the gap between medicine and spirituality, ensuring that their message resonated with the audience on multiple

levels.

Closing Remarks and Interactive Dialogue

Dr. Mrs. Adenike-Adeniyi Aremo brought the session to a close with an eloquent summary of the key points discussed. Her words of gratitude to the church authorities underscored the importance of collaboration in achieving public health goals. In her closing remarks, she reaffirmed the Initiative's commitment to serving individuals and families affected by sickle cell disease, thanking the Riverside Victory Christian Centre for their generosity and support.



One of the highlights of the program was the interactive Q&A session facilitated by Dr. Aremo. Members of the congregation raised pertinent questions about the manifestations of other genotypes, such as SC and AC, and the ethical and medical implications of aborting an SS fetus. These discussions provided an opportunity for Mr. Aremo to delve deeper into the complexities of SCD, offering comprehensive and thoughtful responses that clarified misconceptions and reinforced the importance of informed decision-making.

A Community's Generosity

The outreach was further enriched by the generosity of the Riverside Victory Christian Centre, which donated ₦10,000 to support the Bunmi Akinso-

la Sickle Cell Initiative. This gesture of kindness and solidarity serves as a testament to the shared commitment of the church and the Initiative to improving the lives of those affected by sickle cell disease.

Reflections and Way Forward

The success of this outreach underscores the impact of collaborative efforts in addressing critical health issues. The team's ability to educate and inspire was evident in the engagement of the audience and the tangible support received from the church. This event not only raised awareness but also fostered a sense of shared responsibility among the congregation.

The Riverside outreach serves as a reminder of the power of education in transforming lives. By equipping individuals with knowledge, the Initiative is empowering communities to make informed decisions that can break the cycle of sickle cell disease.

BASCI's Commitment to Change

The Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative remains steadfast in its mission to combat SCD through education, advocacy, and support. Programs like the Riverside outreach are a testament to the organization's dedication to making a difference. However, the Initiative recognizes that much work remains to be done.

With each outreach, BASCI renews its commitment to expanding its reach, deepening its impact, and advocating for policies that prioritize the health and well-being of individuals affected by sickle cell disease.

A Call to Action

As the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative continues its journey, it invites everyone—individuals, churches, and organizations—to join the fight against sickle cell disease. Whether through donations, volunteer work, or simply spreading awareness, there is a role for everyone in this battle. Together, we can create a future where no child is born into the struggle of sickle cell disease.

Conclusion

The outreach program at Riverside Victory Christian Centre was more than an event; it was a beacon of hope and a call to action. It demonstrated the transformative power of education, the strength of community, and the enduring impact of faith and compassion. As BASCI moves forward, it carries with it the lessons and successes of this outreach, determined to light the way for many more communities in need.

The Initiative extends its heartfelt thanks to Mr.

Toluwani Oyewole, Dr. Mrs. Adenike-Adeniyi Are-mo, and Mr. John Oluwole Aremo for their unwavering dedication. It also expresses profound gratitude to the Riverside Victory Christian Centre for their hospitality and support. Together, we are building a future where knowledge, compassion, and collaboration triumph over sickle cell disease.

Written by:

Dr Mrs Aremo

Research Director

Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative

EMPOWERING BOYS

Through Health Education:



The BASC Initiative at Loyola College, Ibadan.

On October 23, 2024, the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative took another bold step in its mission to educate communities about Sickle Cell Disease (SCD). The organization conducted an impactful school outreach program at Loyola College, Ibadan. This program not only highlighted the importance of health education for boys but also emphasized the value of raising awareness about health issues among the younger generation.

The Setting

The outreach team, consisting of Dr. (Mrs.) Aremo Adenike-Adeniyi Evelyn, Miss Deborah Amaechi, Mrs. Adegbite Pelumi, and Mr. Aremo John, was warmly welcomed by Mrs. Ajani, the school's Vice Principal in charge of Co-curricular Activities. She introduced the team to the

School Principal, Mr. Olufemi Ayodele Moradeyo, who, in turn, ensured the initiative was embraced by the students and staff. The students, numbering 1,250, eagerly gathered for the program, underscoring the interest and enthusiasm for learning about SCD and general health matters.

Background: Understanding the Challenge

Sickle Cell Disease is a genetic disorder that affects millions globally, with Africa bearing the highest burden. Characterized by the production of abnormal hemoglobin, SCD causes red blood cells to take on a sickle shape, leading to complications such as anemia, pain crises, and organ damage. Despite advances in treatment, SCD remains a public health challenge, particularly in regions where awareness and early diagnosis are limited.

Health education plays a critical role in bridging this gap, equipping young people with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about their health and support others living with the condition.

The Outreach Program

The Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative's program at Loyola College was designed to address key areas of concern about SCD. Led by Mr. Aremo John, a dedicated advocate for SCD awareness, the team provided an interactive and engaging learning experience. The topics covered included:

1. The Genetics of Sickle Cell Disease

Students learned that SCD is inherited when a person receives two copies of the sickle cell gene—one from each parent. The session emphasized the importance of knowing one's genotype and making informed choices to prevent the transmission of SCD.

2. Symptoms and Complications

The team explained how SCD affects the body, highlighting common symptoms such as fatigue, pain, and recurrent infections. They also discussed the complications that can arise if the condition is not well-managed.

3. Management and Treatment Options

Students were informed about modern approaches to managing SCD, including medications, regular check-ups, and lifestyle changes. The importance of psychological support and community understanding was also emphasized.

Interactive Engagement

A hallmark of the program was its interactive sessions, which allowed students to ask questions and clarify their understanding of SCD.

Question: How is sickle cell transmitted.

Answer: Sickle cell is passed from parents to children through their genes. If both parents are carriers of the sickle cell trait (AS genotype), there is a 25% chance their child will inherit SCD.

Question; At what age do individuals with SCD die?

Answer: With proper medical care and psychological support, individuals with SCD can live long and fulfilling lives, achieving all that others do. The team emphasized the progress in treatment and management that has significantly improved life expectancy for people with SCD.

These sessions helped dispel myths and misconceptions about SCD, creating an environment of openness and understanding.



Cross section of Students of Loyola College Ibadan during "know your genotype campaign"

Key Takeaways

The program provided essential insights for the students and staff, ensuring they walked away with critical knowledge about SCD:

- SCD is a genetic disorder caused by abnormal hemoglobin production.
- Early diagnosis and appropriate treatment significantly improve the quality of life for those living with SCD.
- Community support, understanding, and education are vital in reducing stigma and empowering individuals affected by SCD.

The students were particularly impacted by the realization that individuals with SCD could live healthy, productive lives with the right support systems.

Impact of the Outreach

The Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative's visit to Loyola College demonstrated the transformative power of education. By providing students with factual information and a platform for open dialogue, the outreach program achieved several objectives:

1. Raising Awareness

Many students admitted they had limited knowledge about SCD before the program. The outreach increased their awareness of the condition, its causes, and its management.

2. Combating Stigma

Misconceptions about SCD often lead to stigma, which can negatively impact the lives of those affected. The program addressed these misconceptions head-on, promoting empathy and acceptance.

3. Encouraging Health-Seeking Behavior

The team urged students and staff to know their genotypes and seek regular health check-ups. This message is particularly crucial in preventing the transmission of Sickle cell

The Role of Boys in Health Advocacy

Health education for boys is a cornerstone of community well-being. When boys are equipped with knowledge about health issues, they are better positioned to adopt healthy habits, support their peers, and make informed decisions. This outreach program at Loyola College exemplified how educating boys can contribute to a healthier society.

By focusing on male students, the initiative not only empowered them to take charge of their health but also laid the foundation for future advocacy. Boys educated about SCD today will grow into men who champion awareness and understanding, creating ripple effects throughout their communities.

Conclusion

The Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative's outreach at Loyola College was a resounding success. By educating students about SCD, the program underscored the importance of awareness, early diagnosis, and community support. The interactive nature of the sessions fostered engagement, ensuring the message was well-received.

As the initiative continues its work, it aims to expand its reach to more schools and communities. By collaborating with healthcare professionals, advocacy groups, and educational institutions, the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative is poised to make a lasting impact in the fight against SCD.

Future Plans

Looking ahead, the initiative plans to:

- Organize similar outreach programs in other schools and communities.
- Partner with healthcare professionals to provide on-site genotype testing during future events.
- Develop educational materials tailored for young audiences to further disseminate knowledge about SCD.

The success of the Loyola College outreach is a testament to what can be achieved through education and collaboration. Together, we can reduce the burden of SCD, break down barriers of stigma, and support individuals and families affected by the disease.

Through efforts like this, the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative is building a brighter, healthier future—one school, one student, and one community at a time.

Written by
Deborah Amechi
Bunmi Akinsola

GENOTYPE OUTREACH



Genotype Awareness Outreach at Bishop Philip Secondary School, Iwo Road, Ibadan

Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative Launches Genotype Awareness Outreach at Bishop Philip Secondary School, Iwo Road, Ibadan

Nigeria faces one of the highest burdens of sickle cell disease globally, with an estimated 25% of adults carrying the sickle cell trait (AS). To curb the prevalence and impact of this hereditary disease, the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative (BASC) has been championing the “Know Your Genotype” awareness program. This initiative, aimed at educating communities on genotype compatibility and empowering individuals with knowledge about sickle cell disease, recent-

ly held an impactful outreach session at Bishop Philip Secondary School, Iwo Road, Ibadan.

On May 23, 2024, the BASC outreach team, led by Mr. Aremo John Oluwole, arrived at the school around 7:45 AM to plan their approach. The team was warmly received by Mrs. Oderinde, the Vice Principal. By 8:00 AM, approximately 500 students and 30 teachers had gathered on the assembly ground to participate in an engaging seminar focused on the theme “KNOW YOUR GENOTYPE.”

Key Activities and Sessions

1. Genotype Awareness:

The awareness session was spearheaded by Mr. Aremo John Oluwole, assisted by Mrs. Adegbite Pelumi and Dr. (Mrs.) Ishola Titilope. Mr. Israel Oyetunji and Mr. Toluwani Oyewole managed media and technical support, including visual aids that illustrated chromosomes, their structures, and how genetic inheritance can impact the health of future generations. This provided the students with a clear understanding of how sickle cell disease is inherited and the implications of genotype compatibility in marriage.

2. Core Topics Discussed:

The outreach team covered a range of essential topics:

- **BASC's Vision and Mission:** An overview of BASC's dedication to supporting individuals affected by sickle cell disease.
- **Understanding Sickle Cell Disease:** A foundational explanation of sickle cell disease and its impact.
- **Haemoglobin's Role:** Insight into haemoglobin, its role in the body, and why it matters in sickle cell disease.
- **Genetic Causes of Sickle Cell Disease:** How genetic patterns result in the condition and why genotype awareness is crucial.
- **Inheritance Patterns:** An overview of how sickle cell traits and disease are inherited from parents to children.
- **Treatment and Management Options:** Current medical strategies and management techniques for those affected.
- **Care and Support:** Guidance on best practices for supporting individuals with sickle cell disease in the community.

3. Interactive Q&A Session:

The session included an interactive segment where students engaged with the team. Three students were invited to answer questions and were rewarded with custom BASC pens for their insightful responses. Additionally, six other stu-

dents posed questions about the disease, which were comprehensively addressed by the team.

4. Identifying Special Cases:

During the outreach, two students from SS2, Ibrahim Adigun (genotype SS) and Oyelami Ridwan (genotype AS), were identified as having specific genotypes. They took part in a group photograph with the outreach team to commemorate their involvement.

Acknowledgments and Closing Remarks

The outreach concluded with heartfelt gratitude from the BASC team to the school's principal, vice principals, and teachers for their warm reception and cooperation.

The team emphasized the significance of ongoing genotype education to prevent the spread of sickle cell disease and equip future generations with essential knowledge for informed decision-making.

Future Outreach Plans

As part of its commitment to raising awareness and educating the youth, BASC has scheduled upcoming outreach sessions. The next sessions will be held at Loyola College Ibadan, followed by an outreach at Ikolaba High School, Ikolaba. These initiatives aim to reach even more students and communities, ensuring that genotype awareness becomes a foundation for healthier futures in Nigeria.

The event was documented through photographs, capturing moments with the students, teachers, and BASC volunteers who made the event a success.

Prepared by:

Dr. (Mrs.) Ishola Titilope
Volunteers

EMPOWERING STUDENTS Through Early Genotype Education:



Know Your Genotype Campaign at Kingdom Advancement College, Ibadan

As part of our ongoing mission to spread awareness and education on sickle cell disease (SCD) and genetic disorders, the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative launched a successful outreach at Kingdom Advancement College, Ol-opomeji, Akobo, Ibadan, Oyo State. Recognizing that early education on genotype can debunk myths and reduce stigma, the initiative is committed to fostering acceptance and understanding among young people. This event, held on March 1, 2024, was organized to equip students with knowledge on SCD, encourage informed discussions, and inspire community advocacy.

Welcome and Introduction

The team was warmly welcomed by the school's proprietor, Pastor Sunday Oyewole Olaniyan, and introduced on the assembly ground by Principal Miss Olawoyin Ayooluwa Gloria. The session began with Mrs. Pelumi Adegbite's opening remarks, where she outlined the goals of the program: educating students on SCD, promoting preventive health measures, and inspiring them to become advocates for the cause.

dividuals with genetic disorders.

Educational Sessions and Key Highlights

1. Understanding Sickle Cell Disease (SCD):

Mr. Aremo John Oluwole delivered a detailed presentation covering the basics of SCD, including its causes, types, symptoms, and possible complications. Students engaged actively during this session, asking questions and sharing their perspectives, helping to clarify common misconceptions about the disease.

2. Prevention and Management:

The team emphasized preventive measures and effective management of SCD, highlighting the importance of regular medical check-ups, avoiding extreme temperatures, staying hydrated, and seeking early medical intervention.

3. Advocacy and Community Support:

Mr. Aremo also led a session on advocacy, underscoring the role of students as ambassadors for SCD awareness. This segment was aimed at encouraging them to use their voices within their families and communities to promote understanding and support for individuals affected by SCD.

4. Interactive Q&A Session:

Dr. Temitope Ogunjimi facilitated an engaging Q&A session, where students sought clarifications on various aspects of SCD and shared their thoughts. This open dialogue further reinforced the importance of a supportive community for in-

5. Concluding Remarks:

Dr. Nimotallah Olajire closed the outreach with key takeaways, encouraging students to continue spreading awareness and expressing appreciation to the school community for their involvement and enthusiasm.

Impact and Attendance

The outreach received enthusiastic participation, with 76 students and 10 staff members in attendance. The event concluded with a group photograph with the staff, marking the memorable day. Miss Abiola Olatunji took attendance, while Mrs. Pelumi Adegbite captured the event's highlights as the photographer.

Conclusion

This outreach was an impactful step toward dispelling myths and promoting a supportive environment for those affected by SCD. The Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative extends its sincere gratitude to Kingdom Advancement College for their warm hospitality and generous donation in supporting our continued efforts in awareness and advocacy.

Reported by:

Mr Aremo Oluwole John,
Administrative Head
Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative

REPORT ON HEALTH TALK TO COMMEMORATE WORLD SICKLE CELL DAY ORGANISED BY BUNMI AKINSOLA INITIATIVE ON 19TH JUNE, 2024.

Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative organised a health talk on 19th June, 2024 to commemorate World Sickle Cell Day. World Sickle cell day is celebrated globally every year to sensitise people on steps to take in alleviating pains that individuals with sickle cell disease experience as well as encouraging people to go for genetic counselling before marriage in order to reduce their chance of giving birth to children with sickle cell disease. The day which is also set aside to promote research in areas that seek to provide cure for sickle cell disease has yielded promising results such as the discovery of bone marrow transplantation.



The facilitator at the health talk Dietitian Olubunmi Ojo

This year event which is the Maiden edition of Bunmi Akinsola Sickle cell initiative held at the BASC Initiative Office began at 2:00 PM with an opening prayer following which the Administrative Head, Mr Aremo John gave the welcome address and provided a brief introduction of the initiative and the facilitator's profile.

The keynote Speaker, Mrs. Ojo Olubunmi, a regis-

tered dietician and public health nutritionist, started the activities for the day by engaging some volunteers at the registration stand to take the height and weight of the warriors, from which their Body Mass Index (BMI) was calculated. She was assisted by Dr. Aremo Adenike, Miss Chiamaka, and Mrs. Monsurat. The BMI calculated for each participant was used to educate attendees on importance of nutrition with appropriate recommendations given to address specific needs of participants.

She thereafter made her presentation on the topic: "Optimizing the Use of Traditional Tropical Foods and Developing Effective Dietary Regimens to Enhance Health of Individuals with Sickle Cell Disease."

The presentation was interactive and she engaged the audience to assess their knowledge of different food classes and tropical foods and fruits. She discussed dietary regimens that enhance the health of individuals with sickle cell disease, focusing on the importance of quantity, quality, and timing of meals. She emphasized the benefits of various foods but also highlighted the necessity of moderation.

She emphasised the significance of adequate fluid intake, especially water, for individuals with sickle cell disease.



Mrs Blessing Ogunkeyede (A warrior)And Chief Abisipo Ogunkeyede at the Health talk

Refreshments were served to the participants and each participant got souvenirs. Also honorarium was given to the guest speaker.

The event ended at 4:25 PM with a closing prayer led by Mr. Ogunkeyede, a spouse to one of the warriors.

Attached is the list of the attendees at the event.

Warriors/Relatives:

1. Mrs. Blessing Ogunkeyede (PLWSC)
2. Aabisipo Ogunkeyede
3. Animashaun Ronke
4. Adepoju Samad (PLWSC)
5. Kareem Bolanle
6. Banjo Tolulope (PLWSC)
7. Abolade Eunice Grace
8. Durojaiye Olaitan
9. Durojaiye Temidayo (PLWSC)
10. Akinola Aminata

11. Akinola Samuel
12. Akinola Faridat (PLWSC)
13. Akinola Khalid (PLWSC)
14. Akinsiku Oluwagbohunmi (PLWSC)
15. Mrs. Akinsiku
16. Adeleke Desmond (PLWSC)
17. Adeleke Yemisi
18. Akanbi Jeremiah (PLWSC)
19. Akanbi Pelumi (PLWSC)
20. Mrs. Oyediran
21. Adeniran Omotunde (PLWSC)
22. Oke David
23. Bakare Akintunde
24. Adedoyin Benjamin (PLWSC)

Volunteers:

1. Amaechi Deborah
2. Olorunseye Monsurat
3. Dr. Adeoye Yemisi
4. Dr. Ogunjimi Temitope
5. Dr. Adenike-Adeniyi Aremo
6. Mrs. Adegbite Pelumi
7. Mr. Aremo John

The health talk was a successful event, providing valuable information and support to those affected by sickle cell disease, and fostering a sense of community among the attendees.

Pelumi Adegbite
Desk Officer BASC Initiative

THE NEED FOR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT GROUPS FOR PARENTS OF SICKLE CELL WARRIORS.

The need for mental health support groups for parents of sickle cell warriors is increasingly recognized as a critical component of holistic care for families dealing with this chronic condition. Sickle cell disease (SCD) is a genetic disorder that causes severe pain episodes, frequent hospitalizations, and other complications that can take a significant toll on both the child and their family. The emotional, psychological, and practical challenges faced by parents of children with SCD can be overwhelming, making mental health support essential.

1. Emotional and Psychological Toll

Parents of children with sickle cell disease often experience heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. The constant worry about their child's health, managing painful episodes, and navigating healthcare systems can be mentally and emotionally exhausting.

Parents may also face guilt, feeling responsible for their child's condition, which can further contribute to emotional distress.

Without proper support, these feelings can lead to burnout, affecting both the parent's well-being and their ability to care for their child.

2. Isolation and Loneliness

Parents of children with chronic conditions often

feel isolated, as their experiences are unique and difficult to fully understand for those outside the condition.

Mental health support groups provide a sense of community, where parents can connect with others facing similar challenges.

These groups allow parents to share their experiences, fears, and successes, helping them realize they are not alone in their journey. This sense of connection can alleviate feelings of loneliness and isolation.

3. Practical Coping Strategies

Mental health support groups offer a platform for parents to learn practical strategies for coping with the challenges of daily life with a sickle cell warrior. Facilitated by counselors or healthcare professionals, these groups can provide guidance on stress management, communication skills, and self-care techniques. Parents can also gain valuable information on how to navigate medical care, manage emergencies, and advocate for their child's needs.

4. Improved Quality of Care for the Child

When parents receive adequate mental health support, they are better equipped to care for their child. The stress and mental exhaustion of caregiving can impair a parent's ability to make informed decisions and provide consistent care. By partic-

ipating in support groups, parents gain emotional strength and resilience, which translates to better care for their child, as they are more prepared to handle the challenges that come with SCD.

5. Access to Resources and Advocacy

Support groups often provide access to important resources, such as information about new treatments, clinical trials, or local healthcare services. They can also serve as a platform for advocating for better healthcare policies, raising awareness about sickle cell disease, and promoting research efforts. Parents, through their collective voices, can drive important changes in how SCD is managed and perceived.



In conclusion, mental health support groups are essential for parents of sickle cell warriors, offering emotional support, coping mechanisms, and a sense of community. These groups help alleviate

the psychological burden of caregiving, improve parents' mental well-being, and ensure better care for the child, creating a healthier environment for both parent and child to thrive.

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By Nrs. Awoleye Debby Tomisin
(The Editor-in- chief)
Bunmi Akisola Sickle Cell Initiative

Fruits That Support Red Blood Cell Production

Certain fruits are rich in nutrients that support red blood cell production and help prevent anemia. You can incorporate these options into your diet for optimal blood health:



1. Pomegranate: Pomegranate is rich in iron, vitamin C, and antioxidants, which help increase hemoglobin levels and improve blood flow. Its iron content is especially beneficial for those at risk of anaemia.



2. Bananas: Bananas are a good source of vitamin B6 and folate, both of which are essential for red blood cell production and oxygen transport. They can also help improve energy levels.



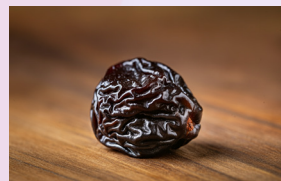
3. Oranges and Citrus Fruits: Oranges, lemons, and grapefruits are high in vitamin C, which enhances iron absorption from other foods, making it easier for the body to use iron in the production of red blood cells.



4. Apples: Apples contain a moderate amount of iron and are rich in vitamin C and antioxidants, which together support red blood cell health.



5. Watermelon: Watermelon is packed with vitamin C and contains iron. Eating watermelon helps keep the body hydrated while supporting red blood cell production.



6. Prunes: Prunes and prune juice are known for their high iron content. This dried fruit is an excellent choice for increasing iron levels in the blood and is often used to help prevent anemia.



7. Grapes: Grapes contain iron, vitamin C, and antioxidants, which help maintain healthy blood cells and improve circulation.



9. Avocados: Avocados provide a good amount of folate, which is essential for red blood cell formation.



Goodbye to outdoor solar panels:

This cell works with low-light and indoors

by Edwin O.

As the world moves towards green energy, especially solar energy, the technology is changing in interesting ways. While originally, solar panels were installed for energy collection from sunlight in open areas, advancements in solar cell technology are now allowing for the collection of energy from indoors.

A new development in solar photovoltaic cells is set to do away with batteries and instead run appliances using low light indoors at home, office or anywhere. This could revolutionize the way we charge our daily use electronics.

This low-cost solar cell technology could replace batteries and reduce e-waste

The dream of harnessing indoor solar power is slowly turning into reality. Thanks to recent developments, solar cells can now operate under basic lighting conditions and use LED and halogen lamps as well as diffused sunlight.

This innovation has been pioneered by a California-based company known as Ambient Photonics. Thus, low-cost dye-sensitized solar cells (DSSCs) were developed, functioning optimally in areas with minimal direct sunlight. These cells are not only cheaper to produce but also charge small, low-energy devices without the need for batteries for everyday use gadgets.

Another interesting innovation in this field is the appearance of bifacial solar cells. These

cells, designed by Ambient Photonics, can gather energy from the front and the back of the cell at the same time. This design enables the cells to collect light from diverse directions and enhances energy production by a factor of three or more than common indoor amorphous silicon cells.

Hence, in devices where bifacial cells are incorporated, such as in remote controls and wireless keyboards, the devices are made to operate optimally irrespective of their orientation, as power is guaranteed even in the darkest backdrop.

How low-light solar cells are creating an eco-friendly future for electronics

The rise of low-light and bifacial solar cells has placed us on the precipice of a new electronics age. These cells are believed to bring a radical change in the method of powering devices by making them much greener than the current battery technologies.

It can be expected that the technology will be integrated into more devices, from IoT devices to simple appliances. This change could not only make electronics more sustainable but also create the beginning of changes that would allow homes and businesses all over the world to use energy more intelligently. Energy harvesting is now moving indoors, and the future of the innovation is already here

Sickle Cell Glossary

Anemia: A condition where there aren't enough healthy red blood cells to carry adequate oxygen throughout the body, leading to fatigue, weakness, and pale skin. In sickle cell disease, anemia is due to the rapid breakdown of misshaped red blood cells that don't live as long as normal cells.

Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT): A treatment that can potentially cure sickle cell disease by replacing the diseased bone marrow with healthy marrow from a donor. However, BMT is complex, costly, and best for young patients with a matched sibling donor. Advances in transplant techniques are making this option safer and more widely available.

CRISPR Gene Editing: An advanced genetic engineering tool used to edit DNA sequences, including the genes that cause sickle cell disease. Clinical trials are exploring CRISPR as a potential cure by modifying blood stem cells to produce normal hemoglobin. This treatment could offer a permanent cure but is still experimental.

Crisis (Vaso-occlusive Crisis): A sudden episode of severe pain caused by the blockage of blood vessels by sickle-shaped cells. Painful crises vary in frequency and intensity, can last hours or days, and require medication and hydration for relief.

Fatigue: Extreme tiredness experienced by people with sickle cell, often due to chronic anemia. Management strategies include stay-

ing hydrated, pacing activities, and getting enough sleep.

Gene Therapy: A treatment under research where a patient's own stem cells are modified to correct or bypass the sickle cell mutation. Unlike a bone marrow transplant, gene therapy doesn't require a donor and could potentially cure sickle cell in more patients.

Genetic Counselling : A service that provides information and support to families with a history of sickle cell disease. Genetic counsellors explain inheritance patterns, the risks of passing on sickle cell, and options for family planning.

Genotype: The specific genetic makeup that determines whether someone has sickle cell disease or just carries the trait. For instance, SS genotype means the person has sickle cell disease, while AS means they carry the trait but do not have the disease.

Hemoglobin: A protein in red blood cells that binds and carries oxygen to tissues. Sickle cell disease is caused by an abnormal type of hemoglobin (hemoglobin S), which forms rigid, sickle-shaped cells that can block blood flow.

Hydroxyurea: An FDA-approved medication that reduces the frequency and severity of pain episodes and the need for blood transfusions. Hydroxyurea works by increasing fetal hemoglobin, which prevents red blood cells from sickling. Recent studies show

that it can benefit even very young children.

Inheritance: Sickle cell disease is inherited in an autosomal recessive pattern. This means both parents must carry the sickle cell trait (*AS*) for a child to have a chance of inheriting the disease (*SS* genotype). Genetic counselling can help families understand these patterns and options.

Jaundice: Yellowing of the skin and eyes, often seen in people with sickle cell, caused by the buildup of bilirubin from the breakdown of red blood cells. Severe jaundice may require medical treatment to prevent complications.

L-glutamine: An FDA-approved supplement for sickle cell that helps reduce pain crises by improving cell hydration and reducing oxidative stress on red blood cells. It is one of the few newer treatments available.

Mutation: A change in a gene that can cause a disease. Sickle cell disease is caused by a mutation in the hemoglobin gene, leading to the production of abnormal hemoglobin S. This mutation originated as a defence against malaria.

Niprisan: An herbal-based drug developed in Nigeria shown to help reduce pain crises in sickle cell patients. Though not widely available, it offers a potential low-cost treatment option for developing countries.

Occlusion: The blockage of blood vessels by sickle-shaped red blood cells, causing pain and potentially damaging organs. This is a key contributor to sickle cell complications.

Organ Damage: Long-term sickle cell disease can lead to damage in organs like the liver, kidneys, heart, and lungs due to restricted blood flow. Monitoring and preventative treatments can reduce this risk.

Oxygen: The essential gas that red blood cells carry to tissues. Sickle cells deliver less oxygen due to their shape, which can worsen symptoms and cause complications like hypoxia. Oxygen therapy may be used in hospitals for sickle cell patients in crisis.

Red Blood Cells (RBCs): Cells that carry oxygen throughout the body. In sickle cell disease, these cells are stiff and sickle-shaped, causing blood flow blockages. This leads to pain and damage to tissues and organs over time.

Screening: Testing for sickle cell disease or trait, often done at birth or before pregnancy, to understand genetic risk. Prenatal and newborn screenings are standard in many countries, helping families plan and manage the disease from an early stage.

Spleen: An organ that helps filter blood and fight infection. In sickle cell patients, the spleen is often damaged from the destruction of red blood cells, which increases infection risk. Some people may require vaccinations or antibiotics to prevent infections.

Stroke: A serious complication of sickle cell disease caused by blocked blood flow to the brain. Regular screenings and preventative treatments, like blood transfusions, can help reduce stroke risk in children with sickle cell.

Transfusion: A procedure where blood from a donor is given to a sickle cell patient to increase the number of healthy red blood cells. Transfusions are commonly used to manage severe anemia, prevent strokes, and treat crises.

Voxelotor (Oxbryta): A newer FDA-approved drug that helps red blood cells retain their round shape, reducing the risk of occlusions and anemia. Voxelotor improves oxygen levels and quality of life in people with sickle cell.

CALL FOR DONATIONS

To further carry out the activities of the Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative effectively, We request the following items and resources from your donations:

1. Medical Support Needs

- Medications: Folic acid
- Medical Equipment: Digital thermometers, blood pressure monitors, glucometers, and test strips.
- Diagnostic Kits: Hemoglobin electrophoresis kits for genotype testing.

2. Psychological Support Needs

- Psychological Tools: Stress relief kits, journals, and coloring books.
- Professional Services: Sponsorship for counseling sessions by certified psychologists.

3. Genotype Campaign Needs

- Genotype Testing Kits: Rapid genotype testing kits or financial sponsorship for laboratory testing.
- Educational Materials: Pamphlets, posters, and banners explaining the importance of knowing your genotype.
- Volunteer Support: Stipends or kits for volunteers (t-shirts, caps, ID badges).

4. Operational Support

- Transportation: A vehicle or funding for mobility during outreach.
- Office Supplies: Computers, printers, photocopiers, and stationery for administrative tasks.
- Technology Support: Software for data management and outreach tracking.

5. Gifts and Incentives

- Appreciation Gifts: Certificates, medals, or branded items (e.g., t-shirts, mugs) for blood donors and volunteers.
- Giveaways: Small tokens for campaign participants (e.g., pens, wristbands, or educational kits).

6. Training and Capacity Building

- Workshops and Seminars: Sponsorship for training sessions on sickle cell management.

- Resource Persons: Experts to train volunteers, caregivers, and affected individuals.

7. Awareness Campaign Support

- Media Coverage: Funding for radio, TV, and online advertisements.
- Production Costs: For documentaries, flyers, and magazine publications.

8. Financial Donations

- Endowment Fund: For long-term project sustainability.
- Scholarships: Support for affected individuals in need of educational funding.

9. Hospital Construction Support

- Land donations, building materials, and architectural expertise to aid the establishment of a sickle cell care hospital.

10. Volunteer Recruitment Support

- Stipends or provisions for field volunteers during events and outreaches.

Here are the different ways you can make donations:

1. Financial Donations

We encourage both monthly and yearly contributions. Transfers can be made to our initiative's bank account:

- Bank Name: Zenith Bank

- Account Name: Bunmi Akinsola Sickle Cell Initiative

- Account Number: 1229393818

2. Cheques and In-kind Donations

We also accept donations in the form of medical supplies, testing kits, and educational materials. These can be dropped off at our office:

**- Address: 60 Oguntinyinbo House,
Beside Ollan Pharmacy,
Opposite IBNE LG Secretariat,
Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria**

Support

Genotype.

Transfusion

Thalassemia

Crisis

Hydroxyurea

Inheritance

Hemoglobin

AST

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bascinitiative@gmail.com
bunmiakinsolasicklecellinitiative.org

   [bascinitiative](https://www.bascinitiative.org)