

**SECRET**

**JUNE 2018**

**NCH/61/004D**

**MEMORANDUM OF THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF HEALTH ON FEDERAL GOVERNMENT  
INTERVENTION FOR HEALTHCARE DELIVERY FOR PERSONS WITH ALBINISM – SUSTAINING THE  
FREE SKIN CANCER TREATMENT IN NIGERIA**

**1 PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this memo is to seek the approval of Council for the sustainability of the Free Skin Cancer Treatment for Persons with Albinism in at least six designated Federal Teaching Hospitals across the six Geopolitical zones and the National Hospital.

**2 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

Albinism is a global phenomenon that affects all race and gender. People living with albinism exist across all strata of humanity, and the common term used for persons affected with albinism is “albino.”

People with albinism have absence or reduced pigment in their eyes, skin or hair. This is as a result of the absence of a pigment called melanin which is essential for the full development of the retina. Reduction in the production of melanin is also responsible for partial development of the retina which is the primary cause of visual impairment in people with albinism. The general health of a child and an adult with albinism is normal and the reduction in melanin pigment in the skin, hair and eyes does not affect the brain, the cardiovascular systems of the lungs, immune system or other parts of the body.

It is estimated that about one in seventy (70) people carry recessive gene for albinism and about 1 in every 17,000 people have albinism disorder. Nigeria is estimated to have one of the highest prevalence rates of persons with albinism in the world.

According to a study carried out by the Albino Foundation on the knowledge, attitude and practices on the education of children with albinism in Nigeria supported by UNICEF, it is estimated that there are about two million persons with albinism living in Nigeria.

Living with albinism can be very challenging. Persons with albinism are susceptible to specific health conditions, principally dermatological and ophthalmic vulnerabilities, requiring higher levels of care and attention. Because of their delicate skin (low melanin) type, 99.9% of persons with albinism are susceptible to skin cancer; thus, skin cancer is the highest health risk persons with albinism face. Increased unprotected exposure to the sun enhances the possibilities of skin cancer and other skin related diseases in persons with albinism. Unfortunately, as a result of ignorant, poverty and discrimination persons with albinism especially those in the rural areas find it difficult to access preventive measures that will reduce their prevalent rate of acquiring skin cancer related diseases. Even where facilities are available persons with albinism hardly afford the high cost of treatment resulting in many of these patients looking up to God until the time of their death. Even when the money is there for treatment, some hardly have the knowledge on where to access medical interventions.

### **3 CONTENT**

The provision of free skin cancer to persons with albinism in Nigeria is informed on the need for Universal Access to Health Coverage by World Health Organisation (WHO) especially to the vulnerable groups. The specific objectives are:

- a. To reduce the high rise of skin cancer among persons with albinism in Nigeria
- b. To reduce the financial burden of paying for cancer treatment by persons with albinism and their families
- c. To increase treatment and rehabilitation rate and overall number of treated persons diagnosed with skin cancer
- d. To increase access to specialized tertiary healthcare by persons with albinism

### **4 PRAYERS**

**The council is invited to note as follows:**

- i. That all persons have the right to life, especially the vulnerable groups
- ii. That skin cancer remains the biggest challenge confronting persons with albinism in Nigeria due to high intensity of the sun rays
- iii. That most persons with albinism cannot afford skin cancer treatment
- iv. That only the National Hospital Abuja provides free skin cancer treatment for persons with albinism in Nigeria
- v. The need for the decentralisation of free skin cancer treatment to six designated teaching hospitals across the six geopolitical zones as (ABUTH, UMT, JUTH, UNTH, UPTH, UCH and NHA)
- vi. The need to increase awareness on skin cancer prevention, and all states and FCT to provide desk officers for Albino awareness campaign.
- vii. The need to include Sunscreen lotion in National Drug Requirement List
- viii. Persons with albinism should be included in accessing services under the Basic Health Care Provision Fund.
- ix. A Desk to be established in the Specialty Division of the Hospital Services Department of the Federal Ministry of Health for Albinism Healthcare interventions 'projects and programmes.
- x. Albinism Healthcare interventions 'projects and programmes to receive funding through budgetary allocations at the Federal and State Ministries of Health, other MDAs and interested corporate bodies, Civil Society Organisations, International Development Partners etc.

**Council is further invited to approve:**

- i. The decentralisation and sustainability of the Free Skin Cancer Treatment for Persons with Albinism in the following designated Federal Teaching Hospitals across the six Geopolitical zones in Nigeria and FCT (ABUTH, UMT, JUTH, UNTH, UPTH, UCH and NHA).
- ii. The notes in para 4 (i – x) above

**Hon Minister of Health.**

**June 2018**

