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Minister Debunks Chloroquine Ban Rumour

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Worried by the negative public reaction to the purported ban of chloroquine as a frontline drug for malaria in the country, Minister of Health, Professor Eytayo Lambo, has allayed fears that the drug had been banned.

Addressing a press briefing in his office weekend, Lambo explained that following the large-scale failure of chloroquine for malaria treatment in the country, a proposal for a change was made and the Artemisinin-based combination Therapy (ACT), was considered in line with the practice in other malaria endemic regions of the world.

"The world is a global village and the resistance of malaria parasite to chloroquine has been spreading over the years - from Asia to East Africa, Central Africa, South Africa and now to West Africa. Indeed, Ghana has changed and is now adopting ACTs as their first line drug", he said.

The minister noted that after conducting the drug therapeutic efficacy trials, new choice of drugs were considered and approval has been given in "principle" to change the first line drug.

He said the policy review which is yet provisional, was premised on the need to protect people especially, the most vulnerable who are under five years and also pregnant women against malaria.

However, Lambo emphatically denied banning chloroquine in Nigeria.

In earlier remarks to the Pharmaceutical Man-ufacturing Group (PMG) of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN).

"Chloroquine is still efficacious in the North West zone. But you will agree that a situation where there is a 60 per cent failure rate of the drug in five out of six zones, it is not safe to recommend it as a frontline drug in a national policy for treatment", he said.

He stressed that the process of malaria treatment policy change was gradual, lasting over a period of time in three phases.

He said all the procedures would be followed and assured partners in the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry that they would be fully involved in the procedures.

"We want to build our capacity to manufacture locally up to 80 per cent of the drugs consumed in this

country locally. This is what will ensure affordable costs and sustainability of our programmes", the minister noted.

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