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### **Introducing Radioactive Iodine Therapy for Differentiated Thyroid Cancers to Usmanu Danfodiyo University Teaching Hospital (UDUTH)**

#### **Abstract**

Nuclear medicine is often regarded as an advanced, high-technology discipline. However, it is practiced in a number of African countries, including Nigeria. Under the present leadership, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Teaching Hospital (UDUTH) recently completed the construction of a new nuclear medicine unit. The unit is equipped with a dual head gamma camera for single-photon emission computed tomography (SPECT), ultrasonography and computed tomography (CT), in addition to fully-functioning histopathology services and will make radiopharmaceuticals for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes accessible to a patient population of 41.8 million people in the Northwestern region of Nigeria. The new nuclear medicine unit is the third of its kind in the nation (however, services are offered only intermittently at the other two sites).

The construction of the nuclear medicine unit at UDUTH could not come at a more important time. Presently, Nigeria is facing a cancer crisis wherethrough the number of cases is rising year to year and the majority of patients present at very late stages of disease where treatment options are limited, and the likelihood of survival is poor. Unlike many cancers, thyroid cancer is potentially curable if the diagnosis is made early enough and the right combination of treatment is available to the patient. A combination of total thyroidectomy followed by radioactive iodine ablative therapy and thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) suppression has been demonstrated to result in the best possible outcome. This combination of treatment is not available on a consistent and affordable basis to Nigerian patients. With adequate training in these techniques, my colleague, Dr. Garba Yunusa, and I will commission these advanced treatment services at UDUTH and establish high-quality nuclear medicine in northern Nigeria and the country at large.