



KADUNA STATE UNIVERSITY

SPECIAL BULLETIN

KASU Marching to Excellence: Embracing Emerging Technologies, Upskilling/Reskilling

ISSN 2286 - 6987

VOL. 43 NO. 6

2nd February, 2026

CONFRONTING A GLOBAL HEALTH CROSSROADS: KASU HOSTS 15TH PROFESSORIAL INAUGURAL LECTURE



Kaduna State University (KASU) once again asserted its place at the forefront of knowledge creation and societal relevance as it hosted its 15th Professorial Inaugural Lecture on Thursday, 29th January 2026, at the University Auditorium. The event, which drew academics, students, traditional representatives, and invited guests, provided an intellectually stimulating platform to interrogate one of the most urgent issues confronting humanity today the twin threats of emerging infectious diseases and antimicrobial resistance.

Delivering the landmark lecture was Professor James Chibueze Igwe, a distinguished scholar in Molecular Microbiology and Director, Centre for Biosafety, Infectious Diseases and One Health, whose work spans decades of research at the intersection of science, public health, and policy. His lecture, aptly titled “Confronting the Double Threat: Emerging Infectious Diseases and Antimicrobial Resistance Strategies for a Sustainable Health System and Solutions,” offered both a sobering diagnosis of current global health vulnerabilities and a roadmap for a more resilient future.

A CELEBRATION OF SCHOLARSHIP AND SERVICE

In his opening remarks, the Vice-Chancellor of Kaduna State University, Professor Abdullahi I. Musa, welcomed participants and expressed deep appreciation for the presence of His Royal Highness and other distinguished guests. He described the professorial inaugural lecture as the pinnacle of an academic career one that reflects years of rigorous scholarship, teaching, mentorship, and service to society.

Professor Musa commended Professor Igwe for his intellectual depth and sustained contribution to scientific knowledge, noting that the University takes pride in scholars whose research transcends the laboratory to address real-world challenges. According to the Vice-Chancellor, such lectures reaffirm KASU’s commitment to research-driven solutions and its responsibility to shape national and global discourse.

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LESSONS FROM A PANDEMIC-SHAKEN WORLD

At the heart of Professor Igwe's lecture was a question that has lingered since the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted lives and systems worldwide: what must humanity do differently to prepare for the next pandemic? Drawing on scientific evidence, he explained that nearly 75 per cent of emerging infectious diseases originate from animals, making zoonotic spillovers a persistent and growing risk in an interconnected world. Equally alarming, he noted, is the silent but escalating crisis of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) a challenge recognised by the World Health Organization as one of the leading threats to global health. Professor Igwe warned that the misuse and overuse of antibiotics in human medicine, agriculture, and animal husbandry have accelerated resistance, rendering once-effective treatments increasingly powerless and placing future generations in jeopardy.

A ONE HEALTH VISION FOR SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

To confront these intertwined threats, Professor Igwe advocated for a One Health approach, which recognises the inseparable link between human, animal, and environmental health. He stressed that sustainable health systems must move beyond fragmented interventions to integrated strategies that address disease emergence at its roots.

Among the key solutions highlighted were effective antibiotic stewardship, routine and affordable diagnostic testing, and local production of testing kits to reduce dependence on external supply chains. He further emphasised the transformative potential of genomics, metagenomics, and next-generation sequencing, describing them as critical tools for precision medicine and early disease detection.

Looking to the future, Professor Igwe underscored the importance of digital health technologies, including artificial intelligence and integrated surveillance systems, to enhance preparedness, data sharing, and rapid response. Central to this vision, he noted, is strong collaboration among healthcare providers, academic institutions, policymakers, and traditional structures.

HEALTH IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

Beyond laboratories and hospitals, Professor Igwe drew attention to the vital role of society in safeguarding public health.

He called on traditional and religious leaders to use their influence to promote vaccination, accurate health information, and responsible health-seeking behaviour. Citizens, he urged, must adhere strictly to medical prescriptions and avoid self-medication, which fuels antimicrobial resistance.

He concluded with a compelling call for collective action, innovation, and sustainability, reminding the audience that the future of health security depends not on isolated efforts but on shared responsibility.

HONOURS, REFLECTIONS, AND INSTITUTIONAL PRIDE

The ceremony also featured the presentation of awards and recognitions to Professor Igwe in acknowledgement of his scholarly achievements and contributions to science and public health. Delivering a goodwill message on behalf of the Emir of Zazzau, Mallam Ibrahim Jubril, Magayakin Zazzau, emphasised the importance of community partnership and public engagement in addressing health challenges.

In her closing remarks, Professor Evelyn Yusuf, Administrator of the Kafanchan Campus, commended Professor Igwe for his unwavering dedication and encouraged sustained collaboration to advance impactful research and innovative health solutions.

ADVANCING KNOWLEDGE FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

The 15th Professorial Inaugural Lecture stood as more than an academic tradition; it was a powerful reminder of Kaduna State University's role in shaping ideas that matter. Through scholarship grounded in relevance and service, KASU continues to champion academic excellence, research-driven innovation, and public health initiatives that contribute meaningfully to national development and the well-being of Nigerians.

