

Awareness and Knowledge of Health Workers towards Professional Team Work in Hospitals in Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined Awareness and knowledge of health workers towards professional team work in hospitals in Northern senatorial district of Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve the objective of the study, three specific objectives were developed from which three research questions were stream - line for the study. The study adopted a social survey research design and a questionnaire was used to gather information. A sample of 250 health professionals were randomly drawn from three hospitals from the area for the study. A structured questionnaire was used to obtain the opinion of the health workers and percentage was used to analyse the data. The result of the findings revealed that there was awareness and knowledge of professional team work among health workers; team work create impact among health workers; and attitude of health workers towards team work have significant impact on patients' care. The study concluded that professional team work in hospitals is inevitable. Management should endeavour to continuously and regularly create awareness on professional team work among health workers through workshops/ seminars and curricula on team work should be incorporated into the various health care training programmes.

Key words: Awareness, knowledge, Health workers, professional, team work

INTRODUCTION

Professional team work in the hospital is an important factor in health services provision to patients. Professional teamwork in the hospital is when the health professionals collectively work and interact interdependently to provide effective care to the patients. It is the practice that deal with collaboration and improvement of communication to expand the traditional roles of health professionals and to make decisions as a unit that works towards a common goal. Thus, "TEAM" can be explain as "Together Everyone Achieve More", which specifically refer to the number of professionals/people working together collaboratively to achieve a common goal or task".

Professional team work can be functional when there is a clear purpose and implementation protocols, procedures, effective communication forum and discussions are held to sort out or share information relating to patients' problems and to improve performance. Professional team work is necessary and effective in Health care delivering, because it can immediately and positively affect patient safety and outcome. The need for effective team work is increasing due to increase in morbidities and complexity of specialization of care (David; Day and Eduardo, 2006). Besides the complex and complicated nature of the health services couple with the increase of chronic diseases like diabetes, cancer and heart diseases have forced professionals to take multidisciplinary approach to health care. The benefits of professional team work in health industry are enormous; it reduces cost of certain operation procedures, optimize scarce resources, minimize resources, services are provided to meet the needs of patients and income is generated to meet the set target. It reduces the issue of one staff / worker being responsible for the patients' whole problem. Professional team worker create a forum where all members working within the system with different background and experience come together to make meaningful contributions to resolve patient's problems (Fernandez, 2012).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of unequal distribution of talents couple with the complexity of the health care system has made professional team work approach to be inevitable. This has given room for unequal participation, thus, resulting in some of the health workers to sit back and letting others to do most of the work, which has the tendency of causing resentment in the

workplace. Lack of team player in some cases often cause some workers to function alone on their own to accomplish a task. By so doing, the process limits creativity in teams of thinking and problem – solving. These consequently caused some of the workers to get burnt out and the patient left without the necessary care. This study is therefore envisage to ascertain the awareness and knowledge of health workers towards professional team work in government hospitals in Northern part of Cross River State, Nigeria.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to investigate awareness and knowledge of health workers towards professional team work in hospitals in Northern senatorial district of Cross River State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were:

- i. To ascertain whether health workers in hospitals in Northern senatorial district, Cross River State, Nigeria are aware and have knowledge about professional team work.
- ii. To examine whether professional team work enhances the productivity of health workers in hospitals in Northern senatorial district of Cross River State, Nigeria.
- iii. To evaluate the impact of professional team work in patients' care in hospitals in Northern senatorial district of Cross River State, Nigeria.
- iv.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were framed for the purpose of the study:

- i. Does health workers in hospitals in Northern senatorial district, Cross River State, Nigeria have knowledge and are aware of professional team work?
- ii. To what extent does professional team work significantly enhance the productivity of health workers in hospitals in Northern senatorial district Cross River State, Nigeria?
- iii. How does professional team work impact on patients' care in hospitals in Northern senatorial district of Cross River State, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of professional team work is an important fact in providing high quality health care to patients. World Health Organization (2010) describe a professional as a member of a profession or vocation who is governed by codes of ethics and profess commitment to competence, integrity, morality, altruism, and the promotion of the public good within their expert domain. Professionals are accountable to those served and to the society. The healthcare industry is made up of multidisciplinary group of professionals, all contributing to the care of the patient. A team in the other hand is a group of persons who make different contributions towards the achievement of a common goal. It involves participatory planning, decision making, problem solving, openness in intra team relationships and avoidance of unnecessary duplication of work. Effective teams are a pre-requisite for achieving sustainable results (Kartikeyan and Chaturvedi, 2009).

Paul and Peterson (2001) defined team work as a distinguishable set of two or more people who interact dynamically, interdependently and adaptively towards a common and valued goal, objective or mission, who have also been assigned specific roles or functions to perform and who have a limited lifespan of membership. Adindu and Asuquo (2013) succinctly describe professional team work as a joint action by a group of professionals in which each person subordinates his or her individual interest and opinions to the unity and efficiency of the group. They further said that professional team work connotes the working together in unison towards the achievement of an agreed goal by a group of professionals. In team work, members of the group have the responsibility to plan or set objectives, formulate policies and monitor the implementation of necessary strategies to achieve the set objectives and take collective decision.

Professional teamwork is defined by Scarnati (2001) in Tarricone and Luca (2002) "as a cooperative process that allows professionals to achieve extraordinary results". Harris & Erhabor and Adias (2014) also asserted that a team has a common goal or purpose where team members can develop effective, mutual relationships to achieve team goals. Teamwork implies individuals working together in a cooperative environment to achieve common team goals through sharing knowledge and skills.

Professional teamwork is very essential in the delivery of health care services to patients. Physicians, nurses, pharmacists, technicians, and other health professionals must coordinate their activities to deliver safe and efficient patient care. Health workers provide interdependent services (e.g., a surgeon operate a patient, the anesthesiologist gives the anesthesia, the nurses provide the medication, and others functioning in specific roles and share the common goal of safe care. Considering the interdisciplinary nature of the work and the necessity of cooperation among the professionals who execute it, professional teamwork is necessary for the purpose of patient safety. When health professionals work as a Team, there is tendency for members of the team to make fewer mistakes than do individuals, especially when each team member is conscious of his or her responsibilities, as well as those of other team members (Smith-Jentsch, Salas and Baker, 1996).

Aye (2013) asserted that professional teamwork is the interaction or relationship of two or more health professionals who work interdependently to provide care for patients. He said that professional teamwork implies that members of the health team: Are mutually dependent; See themselves as working collaboratively for patient-centred care; have respect for each other; benefit from working collaboratively to provide patient care; share information which may lead to shared decision-making; and know when teamwork should be used to optimize patient-centred care.

Aye further stressed that professional teamwork is an indispensable ingredient of success whenever and wherever people have to come together to achieve goals because on their own, either they would be unable to achieve those goals at all or achieve them only sub-optimally. He further maintained that, in the health profession where there are various forms of collaboration and interdependence are mandatorily required to achieve certain health outcomes, professional team work is the basic essential requirement for success. Better teamwork among health professionals in Nigeria will reduce negative health outcomes for patients, improve the system of care and deliver efficient and effective health services to clients or patients.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Northern senatorial district of Cross River State consist of five (5) local governments (Yala, Ogoja, Bekwara, Obudu and Obanlikwu) and has a projected population of 1,015,300 as at 2016. The area has eight (8) secondary health facilities (five are owned by government and three by the mission). Besides, there are private clinics and primary health centres that provide health services to the public too. The study population included Doctors, Nurses, Pharmacists, Health information staff and other paramedical health professionals in the hospitals. The consent of the affected staff was sought before the commencement of the study.

A sample of three (3) government secondary health facilities namely; General Hospital Obanlikwu, General Hospital Obudu, and General Hospital Ogoja were used for the study. Two hundred and fifty (250) health workers were contacted and informed about the study. A twenty – three (23) item questionnaire was designed and two hundred and fifty (250) copies printed and distributed to the staff from the sampled hospitals for completion. The questionnaire was in four parts: the first part seek the socio demographic characteristics of the respondents; the second explored teamwork awareness and knowledge among health professionals; the third explored the respondents' team work relationship in the hospitals; and the fourth addressed their perceptions of and attitude toward team work in the hospital.

The completed questionnaire were collected back without any being destroyed, thus representing 100% success. Data were extracted from the questionnaire and percentage was used to analyze the research questions to have a true picture of the respondents' views on the research problem. A discussion was carried out on the findings to establish the relationship between the variables under investigation.

SOCIO DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

A total of 250 questionnaire were distributed to respondents from the three (3) health facilities for completion and the same number (250) were returned, representing a response rate of 100%. The socio – demographic characteristics of the respondents is presented below in table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Age of respondents

Age (years)	NO. of respondents	Percentage (%)
20 – 30	30	12
31 – 40	60	24
41 – 50	80	32
51 – 60	55	22
61+	25	10
Total	250	100
Sex of the respondents		
Sex	NO. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	90	36
female	160	64
Total	250	100
Religious background of the respondents		
Religion	NO. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Christianity	210	84
Islam	5	2
Others	35	14
Total	250	100
Profession affiliation		
Profession	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Doctors	10	4
Nurses	180	72
Pharmacy staff	15	6
Health information Mgt.	25	10
Medical Laboratory staff	14	6
Others	6	2
Total	250	100
Allocation of questionnaire according to hospitals		
Hospital	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
General hospital Ogoja	100	40
General hospital Obudu	80	32
General hospital Obanliku	70	28
Total	250	100

Source: questionnaire

The data in table one above shows the age of respondents. The data revealed that 30 respondents, representing 12% were within the age bracket of 20 to 30 years; 60 respondents, representing 24% were within the age bracket 31 to 40 years; 80 respondents, representing 32% were within the age bracket 41 to 50 years; 55 respondents, representing 22%, fall within the age bracket of 51 to 60 years; and 25 respondents representing 10%, were within 61 years and above. It was observe from the data that respondents within the age bracket of 41 to 50 years dominated the study, they were 80 (32%).

The data on the sex of respondents revealed that, 90 respondents, representing 36% were male and 160 respondents, representing 64% were females. The data revealed that female respondents were more than the male.

The religious status of respondents were presented in the table. The data revealed that; 210 respondents, representing 84%, were Christians; 5 respondents, representing 2%, were Muslims; and 35 respondents, representing 14%, were engage in various forms of worship. Christians dominated in the study. This may be due to the fact that the study was carried out in a Christian dominated environment.

The analysis of professional affiliation revealed that; 10 respondents, representing 4%, were doctors; 180 respondents, representing 72%, were Nurses; 15 respondents, representing 6%, were Pharmacy staff; 25 respondents, representing 10%, were health information management staff, 15 respondents, representing 6%, were medical laboratory staff; and 5 respondents, representing 2%, were from other units. However, Nurses dominated in the study, they were 180 respondents, representing 72%.

The analysis of the distribution of questionnaire was based on the staff strength of the hospitals. General hospital, Ogoja has staff strength of 360, hence has 100 questionnaire, representing 40%; General hospital Obudu with 240 staff has 80 questionnaire, representing 32%; and General hospital Obanliku with 230 staff has 70 questionnaire, representing 28%.

Awareness and knowledge of professional teamwork in the hospital

Table 2: Awareness and knowledge of teamwork in the hospital

NO	Questionnaire item	YES	%	NO	%	TOTAL
6	Do you know what professional team work is?	185	74	65	26	250
7	Do you practice professional team work in your hospital?	135	54	115	46	250
8	Do you enjoy working with other professionals while on duty as a team?	150	60	100	40	250
9	Does your working with other health professionals as a team enable you share ideas?	170	68	80	32	250
10	Does your working together as a team makes the job easier for you?	135	54	115	46	250
11	Have you been exposed to any form of training on professional team working?	140	56	110	44	250

Source: questionnaire

Table 2: summarizes the respondents' responses on awareness and knowledge of professional team work in the sampled hospitals. 185 (74%) respondents said they were aware and have knowledge of professional team work, while 65 (26%) said they do not. 135 (54%) respondents accepted that professional team work is practice in their hospital, while 115 (46%) said professional team work is not practice in their hospitals. 150 (60%) respondents, accepted that they enjoy working as a team, while 100 (40%) respondents said they do not enjoy working as a team with others. It was also observed that 170 (68%) said working with other health professionals as a team enable them share ideas, 80 (32%) respondents said it does not. 135 (54%) respondents said working together as a team makes the job easier, while 115 (46%) said it does not. 140 (56%) respondents said they have not been exposed to any form of training in professional team work, while 110 (44%) said they have.

Section 3: Team work relationship among health workers in the hospital

Table 3: teamwork relationship among health workers in the hospital

NO	Questionnaire item	YES	%	NO	%	TOTAL
12	Do you have work teams in your hospital?	143	57	107	43	250
13	Will you support the establishment of teams in your hospital?	205	82	45	18	250
14	Do you think the present ways of organizing activities in patient care in your hospital promotes the establishment of team work?	196	78	54	22	250
15	Does team work in your organization enable your colleagues to make meaningful contributions?	235	94	15	6	250
16	Does team work often result in conflicts among your work colleagues or other professionals in your hospital?	60	24	190	76	250
17	Does conflict caused some staff to feel that their jobs have been taken away from them by some of their colleagues?	118	47	132	53	250

Source: questionnaire

Table 3 above presents respondents' responses on professional teamwork relationship among health workers in the sampled hospitals. From the table, 143 respondents, representing 57% accepted that they have professional work teams in their hospitals, while 107 respondents, representing 43% said NO. 205 respondents, representing 82%, accepted that professional work teams should be establish in their hospitals, while 45 respondents, representing 18%, said NO. 196 respondents, representing 78%, supported that the present ways of organizing activities in patient care in their hospital promotes the establishment of professional team work, while 54 respondents, representing 22%, disagreed.

235 respondents, representing 94%, accepted that professional team work enable their colleagues to make meaningful contributions, while 15 respondents, representing 6%, disagreed. 60 respondents, representing 24%, accepted that professional team work often result in conflicts among colleagues / other professionals, while 190 respondents, representing 76%, disagreed to it. 132 respondents, representing 53%, accepted that professional team work caused some staff to feel that their schedules have been usurped or taken away from them, while 118 respondents, representing 47% disagreed.

Section 4: Respondents' perceptions of and attitude towards professional team work in the hospital.

Table 4: respondents' perceptions of and attitude towards professional team work

NO	Questionnaire item	YES	%
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18	Which of the following express your experience in the course of your working in the hospital?					
	• Being told that some schedules are meant for specific or other professionals	87		35		
	• Being told that certain responsibilities are a no go area	62		25		
	• Working arrangement emphasized professional boundaries	56		22		
	• Being harassed for interfering with other peoples' responsibilities	45		18		
TOTAL		250		100		
	Questionnaire item	YES	%	NO	%	TOTAL
19	Do you consider team work as a useful approach to effective and sustainable high quality care in your hospital?	190	76	60	24	250
20	Do you think it is possible to form professional teams in various departments of your hospital?	220	88	30	12	250
21	Do you think inter professional team work is necessary for the maintenance of departments/ units in your hospital?	210	84	40	16	250
22	Does team work promote peaceful co- existence as you work in the hospital?	201	80	49	20	250
23	Superior and inferior relationship is a hindrance to team work	220	88	30	12	250

Source: questionnaire

Table 4 above shows respondents' perceptions of and attitude towards team work. In questionnaire item 18, respondents were to express their experiences in relation to team work in their institutions; being told that some jobs are meant for other professionals has 87 respondents, representing 35%; 62 respondents, representing 25%, said that certain jobs are meant for a particular people; 56 respondents, representing 22% said Working arrangement emphasized professional boundaries; and 45 respondents, representing 18%, said they were being harassed for interfering with other peoples' responsibilities.

On whether team work is consider as a useful approach to effective and sustainable high quality care in their hospitals; 190 respondents representing 76% said YES, while 60 respondents, representing 24% said NO. 220 respondents, representing 88% said the formation of professional teams in various departments of their hospitals is possible, while 30 respondents, representing 12% said NO. 210 respondents representing 84%, accepted that inter professional team work is necessary for the maintenance of departments/ units in their hospitals, while 40 respondents representing 16% said it was not possible. 210 respondents representing 80%, said team work promote peaceful co- existence as you work in the hospital. While 49 respondents representing 20% disagreed. 220 respondents representing 88% said superior and inferior relationship is a hindrance to team work, while 30 respondents, representing 12% disagreed.

Discussion

This study seek to investigate awareness and knowledge of health workers towards professional team work in Government hospitals in Northern senatorial district of Cross River State, Nigeria. Three government hospitals were sampled for the study. A structured questionnaire was design and 250 copies were printed and distributed to respondents from the three hospitals for completion. The data were extracted from the questionnaire, which form the bases for discussion and analysis.

The result of the study shows high awareness and knowledge of team work in the sampled hospitals. Out of the 250 respondents studied, 185 (74%) indicated that they have knowledge of team work while 65 (26%) said NO. Also, 170 (68%) respondents accepted working as a team and 135 (54%) respondents said working as a team makes the job easier for them. However, the study revealed that awareness and knowledge of professional team work was based on training; 140 (56%) respondents accepted that they were exposed to team work training. Most of the respondents who accepted being exposed to team work training were from General hospital Ogoja and General Hospital Obanliku. The reason for low awareness and poor knowledge of team work at General hospital Obudu could be due to the fact that the hospital has just been established and most of the workers have not been trained on team work. From the result of the study, it can be observed that professional team work may not be an aspect of the training programme for some health workers. Thus, those who have knowledge and are aware of it benefits tend to embrace it in their work environment.

An assessment of team work relationship revealed that, majority of the respondents want professional teams to be formed in their health institutions. 205 (82%) respondents indicated that work teams should be formed in their organizations. Formation of work teams will be fertile to the growth of the hospitals as the respondents recognised that team work will enable

staff to make meaningful contributions and it is not a strategy to create conflict or acrimony in the hospital. Formation of work teams will also increase efficiency and create opportunity for easy resolution of patients' problems.

The fact that health care industry is a multidisciplinary area, defines boundaries and specifies where every professional has to work and stop. When team work bring them together, each professional makes his / her own contribution from their various experiences what they feel can help to resolve patient's problem. Thus, specialization makes certain responsibilities to be strictly meant for or reserve for a particular professional(s), by virtues of their training. The study further revealed that team work is a useful approach to effective and sustainable high quality care in the sampled hospitals; 190 (76%) respondents indicated in favour and 60 (24%) respondents said NO. It has been observed that the formation of team work is inevitable, it will promote peaceful co-existence of the staff in the hospital.

The issue of superior and inferior dichotomy seem to be a hindrance in team work relationship in the study area. This may be as a result of the doctors and Nurses feeling that, they are the major stakeholders in healthcare industry and have control over the patient than other professionals. However, adequate orientation or awareness can be created to overcome this hurdle.

Conclusion

Based on the above premise, we conclude that there is fair awareness and knowledge of team work in the research area. Team work should be promoted in the hospitals to enhance effective and efficient health services delivery to patients. Departmental or units heads should be encourage to form work groups and in – house seminars or workshops can be organized to create awareness and improve the knowledge of staff on team work in the study centre.

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