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PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS PALLIATIVE CARE IN NIGERIA

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Background: Palliative care is a global public health issue. Studies have reported public inadequate or lack of knowledge and negative perceptions towards palliative care. Given the aging population and associated increase in the number of patients requiring palliative care it is vital to explore the public's understanding of this concept.

Objective: The aim of this study was to establish the current levels of awareness and attitudes towards palliative care among the general public in Nigeria.

Methods: A community-based cross-sectional study among 6,358 individuals aged over 20 years was conducted between April to September 2016. Information was collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of 15 items. EPI-INFO and SPSS software statistical packages were applied for data entry and analysis. Chi-square and logistic regression were computed to assess statistical association and the level of significance. A p-value of equal or less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results: A total of 564 responses were obtained (response rate 8.9%). Female gender 388 (68.9%) and previous experience 358 (63.5%) influenced awareness in a positive direction. Respondents 401 (70.1%) who worked in healthcare themselves or who had a close relative or friend who had used a palliative care service were more aware of palliative care and the availability of different palliative care services. Suggested strategies to enhance awareness and community involvement in palliative care include formulation of appropriate policies and education of policy makers.

Conclusions: Nigeria public awareness and attitude of the concept of palliative care remains insufficient for widespread effective and appropriate palliative care to be accepted as the norm. In particular, those without previous family-related experiences lack awareness. An increased public awareness of palliative care is needed, in order to improve knowledge of and access to services when required.

Biography

Abdul Raheem IS, is a Nigerian medical doctor with postgraduate training in Public Health. He is a fellow of both Royal Institute of Public Health (London) and National Postgraduate Medical College, Faculty of Public Health (Nigeria). He holds Master degrees in Public Health, Epidemiology & Biostatistics and Public Administration. He specializes in Disease Surveillance, Geriatrics and Epidemiology. His areas of interests are Disease surveillance, Geriatric Epidemiology, Geriatric poly-pharmacy, Geriatric palliative care, End of life care, Care of the Elderly, Health planning and administration. He has more than sixty publications to his credit in both local, National and International Journals. Dr Abdulraheem has served as a Consultant to WHO, UNICEF, NPI, GAVI & FMOH (Nigeria) on Disease Surveillance, Polio Eradication Programme and National Epidemiological review of Communicable Diseases. Currently, AbdulRaheem Ibraheem Shola a Consultant to World Health Organization on Disease Surveillance and Polio Eradication Programme as well as Associate Professor in the Department of Epidemiology & Community Health, College of Medicine, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

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