
ACCESS TO AND UTILIZATION OF INFORMATION BY NURSES AND MIDWIVES OF SPECIALIST HOSPITAL IN YOLA ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The research investigated access to and Utilization of Information by Nurses And Midwives in Specialist Hospital, Yola. Information is the life wire of any profession to be efficient and effective. patients visits the hospital for different needs, and for the nurses and midwives to be effective in the discharge of their responsibilities they need vital information. Information in the technological age can be accessed and utilized in various ways. It is on these bases that the researchers investigated how they access and utilize information. The objectives of the study were to determine the types of information, sources of information used, purpose for the use of the information and problems militating against access to and utilization of information by nurses and midwives in Specialist Hospital Yola, Adamawa State. The target population was 286 nurses and midwives and a sample of 200 was selected, out of which only 194 responded and was used for the analysis. Descriptive statistics was used for the analysis. The major findings revealed that patients' psychology, economic status, drug efficacy are the type of information they access, patients and laboratory test results are the major sources of information. Counseling, treatment and self-protection were the major purpose for utilization of information by nurses and midwives. The major problems faced in accessing and utilization of information includes language barrier, lack of functional laboratories, libraries, computer illiteracy and lack of access to internet services. The researchers therefore recommended that, Nurses and midwives need to be computer literate especially in the information age to access vital information that would facilitate improved services to patients, .

Keywords: *Information, Utilization, Nurses and midwives.*

INTRODUCTION

The Specialist Hospital Yola was established by the Colonial Administrators in 1938 as General Hospital Yola to cater for the people of the present Adamawa state which was created on 27th August, 1991 (decree No. 41 of 1991) and the neighboring states. As a result of increase in population that led to the creation of more states

and Local Governments, more general hospitals were created and thus, general hospital Yola was upgraded to specialist hospital Yola in 1986. Since it is located in the state capital, it serves as a referral center whereby all complicated cases arising from the various general hospitals in the state can be referred to for treatments. As the name implies, the hospital has a lot of specialized

medical personnel in all aspects of health, ranging from Consultants/Doctors, Nurses, Midwives and Laboratory Technicians.

Specialist hospital Yola has a total of two hundred and sixty eight (268) trained nurses and eighteen (18) midwives giving a total of two hundred and eighty six (286) nurses and midwives. The specialist hospital has a total of fourteen (14) wards and the duties of nurses and midwives are spread on all kinds of treatment based on their areas of specialization. But generally, their duties are being standardized and regulated by the Nursing Council.

There is a universal assumption that man was born innocent and ignorant and should actively seek for knowledge and this can only be achieved through having access to information and utilizing it appropriately. The concept "information" can be looked as power because, every living being respond or acts to every situation based on the available information at his/her disposal. Womboh and David (2002) simply stated that, information is processed data that could be safely used for decision-making. Ranganathan as cited in Kumar (1996) emphasized the need for Librarians to link the right user with the right information at the right time as the only means of saving the time of the user. This will not only save the user's time but also, will give him the opportunity to attend to the immediate problems at the right time.

Accessing information could be done in a serene atmosphere or cruel manner depending on how the information seekers and information providers conduct themselves or acts when looking for, receiving or acquiring information. According to Dyedum (2006), the anger, anxiety, gesture, utterances and any other character displayed by information seeker to access information or news that may inform or misinform his knowledge or

understanding of something constitutes information need and seeking behavior. Access to and utilization of information by clientele differs significantly based on their profession or education. For example, a farmer may be interested in information that will help him in boasting his agricultural products, consumers may also need information on price of commodities and their nutritional values while a lawyer would need information about his client and past proceedings of judgment that are relevant or related to the case at hand. Many people would have been rich but because the right information reached them at the wrong time, they missed the opportunity.

According to Center for Disease Control (2003), nurses know that their decisions have implications on patient's outcome which could be between life and death. It is obvious that many patients could not have died but because the right information about their ailment came late to the notice of the nurses/midwives, they had to die. According to Johnson (2009), hospitals face increasing demand to participate in a wide range of quality improvement activities with an increasing role and influence of nurses and yet, hospitals confront challenges with regard to nurses involvement due to scarcity of information about the patients, scarcity of nursing resources, difficulty of involving nurses at all levels from bedsides to management, growing demand to participate more often duplicative quality improvement activities; the burdensome nature of data collection and reporting; and shortcomings of traditional nursing education in preparing nurses in their evolving today's contemporary hospital settings.

Just like any other profession, nurses and midwives access information about their patients in

order to render improved services to the patients. According to Middleton, (2003), since nurses spend most of the time at the patients' bedside and are in the best position to effect the care, patients receive during their hospital stay, catching medication errors, catching patients' fall, and recognizing when patients need something, they need quality information more than any other person in the system to take decisions. The number and type of decisions faced by nurses are related to the work environment, perception of their clinical role, operational autonomy, and the degree to which they see themselves as active and influential decision makers.

They also require information on drugs to determine their efficacy, (Ubegbu 2001). And getting the right information about the patient's condition of health for onward prescription has always been a problem to nurses and midwives. Patitungkho and Deshpande (2005) unveiled that, although information use and clinical decision making are the real world potentials for evidence based decision-making in nursing, the role of information is principally aimed at reducing clinical uncertainty, that is, finding relevant research and make decisions. The members further lamented on the usefulness of information to nurses that, access to relevant, accurate and current information is becoming crucial for nurses to keep their knowledge up to date.

The myth that "nurses are the key caregivers" is not an over exaggeration but rather, a plain fact. Draper and Felland (2008) while highlighting some of the roles of nurses pointed out that, they can significantly influence the quality of care provided ranging from treatment and patients' outcomes. Consequently, hospitals pursuit of high quality patients' care is dependent, at least in part,

on their ability to engage and use nursing resources effectively which will likely become more challenging as these resources become increasingly limited. With proper documentation on the patient's chart, nurses would have the information they needed to ensure quality and to defend that care in court, where necessary. Henderson, (2009) suggested that, the reason is not far from the fact that, they have always been facing the challenges of reconciling documentation with quality patient care.

Middleton, (2003) pointed out that, nurses are subject to increasing scrutiny regarding their record-keeping, noting that legislations such as the human rights act 1998 and the data protection act 1998 has increased the profile of and access to health records. He also revealed that patients are increasingly willing to complain about their care and whether such complains are settled by health care providers or in courts, comprehensive access to and utilization of information and records are essential. Based on the above records, it has been realized that nurses and midwives are confronted with challenges of discharging their duties with regard to reconciling available records and patients' care coupled with the fear that, they can be dragged to courts if treatments are faulty. Getting the right information about the patient's condition of health for onward prescription has always been a problem to nurses and midwives. It is against this background that the researchers were prompted to investigate how nurses and midwives access and utilize information toward providing better health services in Specialist Hospital Yola, Adamawa State, as a case study..

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- 1 To identify the types of information required by nurses and midwives in Specialists Hospital Yola, Adamawa State.
- 2 To identify the Sources of information used by nurses and midwives in Specialists Hospital Yola, Adamawa State.
- 3 To identify the Purpose for the use of the information by nurses and midwives in Specialists Hospital Yola, Adamawa State and;
- 4 To identify the Problems militating against access to and utilization of information needs by nurses and midwives in Specialists Hospital Yola, Adamawa State.

METHODOLOGY

Survey research method was employed for this research because of its relevance in terms of efficiency and usefulness in collecting data. Survey research is a technique for gathering information from a large number of users and it make use of tools like questionnaire, observation and interview to collect data. Thus the research technique was considered quite suitable for this study. The population of the study consists of two hundred and eighty- six (286) nurses and midwives of Specialist Hospital Yola. Structured questionnaire was used as the main instrument for data collection. Two hundred (200) questionnaires were administered to the respondents while, one hundred and ninety four (194) were returned and used for the analysis. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1: Response Rate of the respondents

NO. OF QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED	200 (100%)
NO. OF QUESTIONNAIRE RETURNED	194(97.0%)

The table above shows that, out of the two hundred (200) questionnaire administered, one hundred and

ninety four (194) representing 97% were duly filled and returned and were used for the analysis.

Table 2: Qualification of the respondents

STATUS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
NURSE	14	38.1
MIDWIFE	8	4.1
BOTH	112	57.7
TOTAL	194	100.0

The table 1 above shows that out of the 194 nurses and midwives that responded to the questionnaire 112 (57.7%) had double qualifications of nursing and

midwives training, 74 representing (38.1%) had only nursing qualification while only 8 (4.1%) qualified as midwives only. Those with double qualifications are

female counterpart because mostly starts with midwifery and later go for nursing.

Table 3: Sex status of the respondents

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
MALE	68	35.1
FEMALE	126	64.9
TOTAL	194	100.0

The table above shows that 68 respondents representing (35.1%) of nurses and midwives in the Yola Specialist Hospital were males while the majority 126 representing (64.9%) were females

Type of Information Required

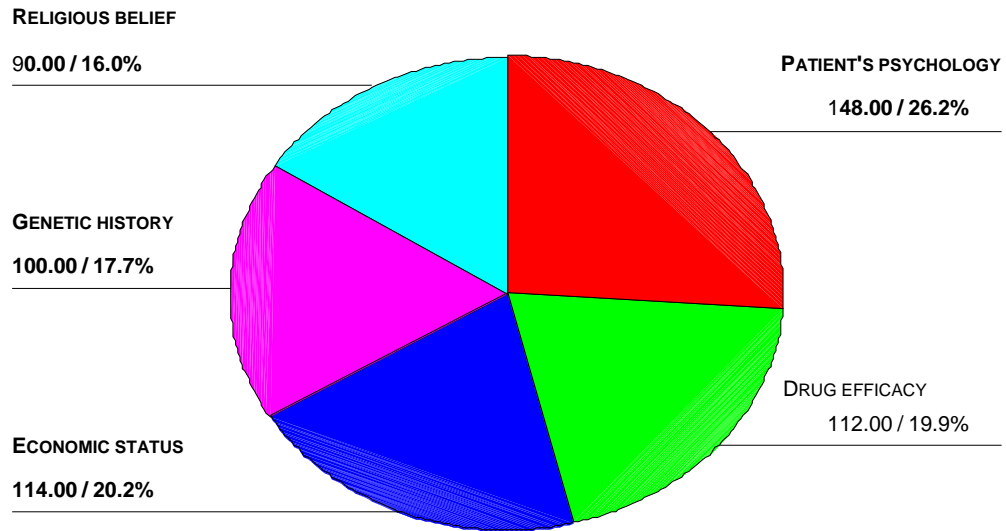


Figure 1: Showing types of information required.

The chart above shows the different types of information required by nurses and midwives in the discharge of their duties ranging from patient psychology 148 (26.2%), economic status of patient 114 (20.2%), information on drug efficacy 112(19.9%), patient’s genetic history 100 (17.7%), while the least

is patient’s religious belief 90 (16.0%). The chart above shows that for proper handling of patients by nurse and midwives they sought for different types of information. The implication of this is that failure to get the right information about the patient’s ailment at the right time affects his/her treatment

Table 4: Computer Literacy of the respondents

		FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID PERCENT	CUMULATIVE PERCENT
	NIL	12	6.2	6.2	6.2
	YES	86	44.1	44.3	50.5
	NO	96	49.2	49.5	100.0
	TOTAL	194	99.5	100.0	
MISSING	SYSTEM	1	.5		
TOTAL		195	100.0		

The respondents were asked whether they are computer literate based on the question asked and they responded as follows: 86 (44.1%) responded yes, 96 (49.2%) responded no, while 13 (6.7%) were

undecided. This indicates that a good number of nurses and midwives are not computer literate. Similarly,

Table 5: Access to Internet Services by the respondents

		FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID PERCENT	CUMULATIVE PERCENT
	NIL	34	17.4	17.5	17.5
	YES	40	20.5	20.6	38.1
	NO	120	61.5	61.9	100.0
	TOTAL	194	99.5	100.0	
MISSING	SYSTEM	1	.5		
TOTAL		195	100.0		

The respondents were equally asked whether they have access to internet services 40 (20.5%) responded yes, 120 (61.5%) responded no, while 35 (17.9%) were undecided. The lack of access to

internet services might be due to the problem of computer literacy of some of the nurses and midwives.

Sources of Information used by Nurses and Midwives.

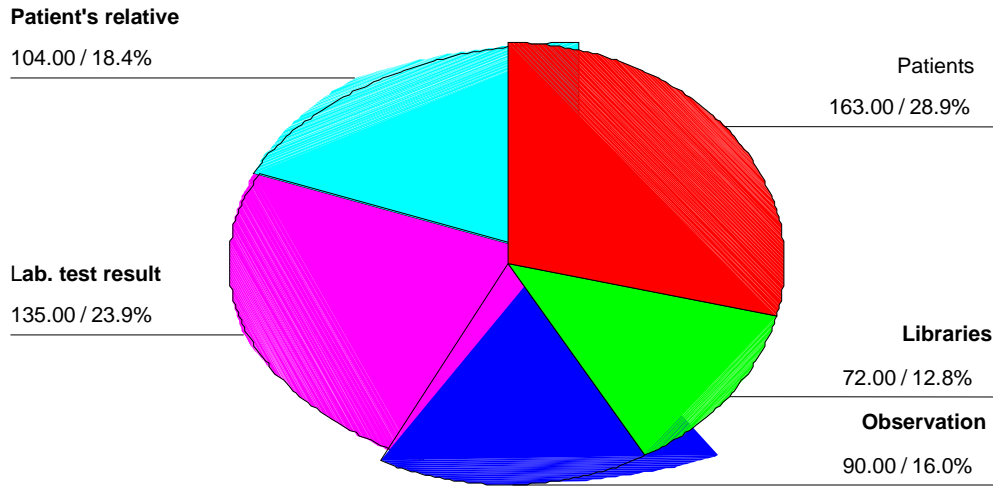


Figure 2: Showing sources of information used by Nurses and Midwives.

Figure 2 above also shows sources of information nurses and midwives used for their work apart from internet services. The respondents indicated sources of information to includes patients 163 (28.9%), laboratory test

results 135 (23.9%), patients relatives 104 (18.4%), observations 90 (16.0) and libraries 72 (12.8%). Based on the responses, laboratory test and, patients are the major sources of information to nurses and midwives.

Purpose for the Use of Information.

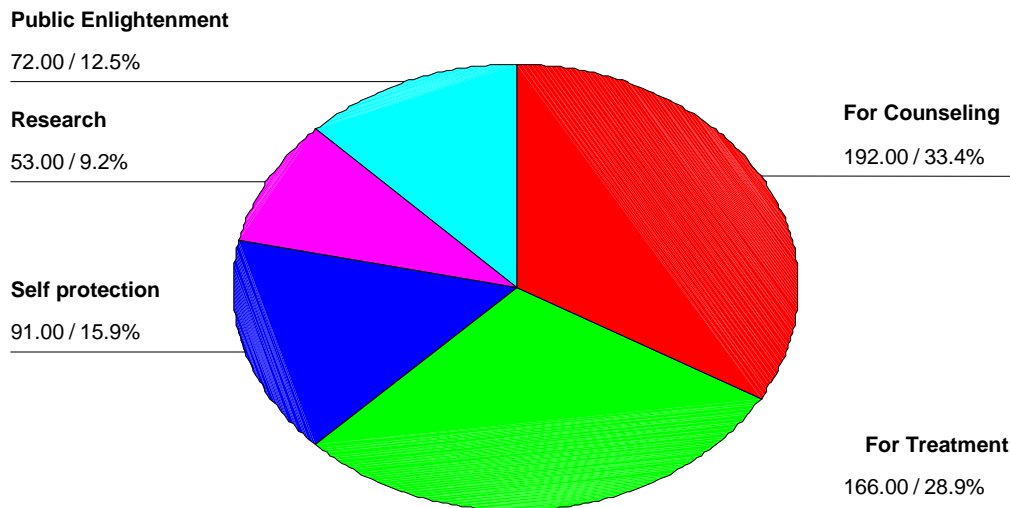


Figure 3: Showing purpose for the use of information

Figure 3 above shows the purpose for which the nurses and midwives utilized information they access to includes, treatment 166 (28.9%), counseling 192 (33.4%), self protection 91 (15.9%) public enlightenment 72 (12.5%), while research 53

(9.2%).The results above shows that the major purpose for utilization of information accessed by nurses and midwives are for treatment and counseling of patients.

Problems Militating Against Access to and Utilization of Information.

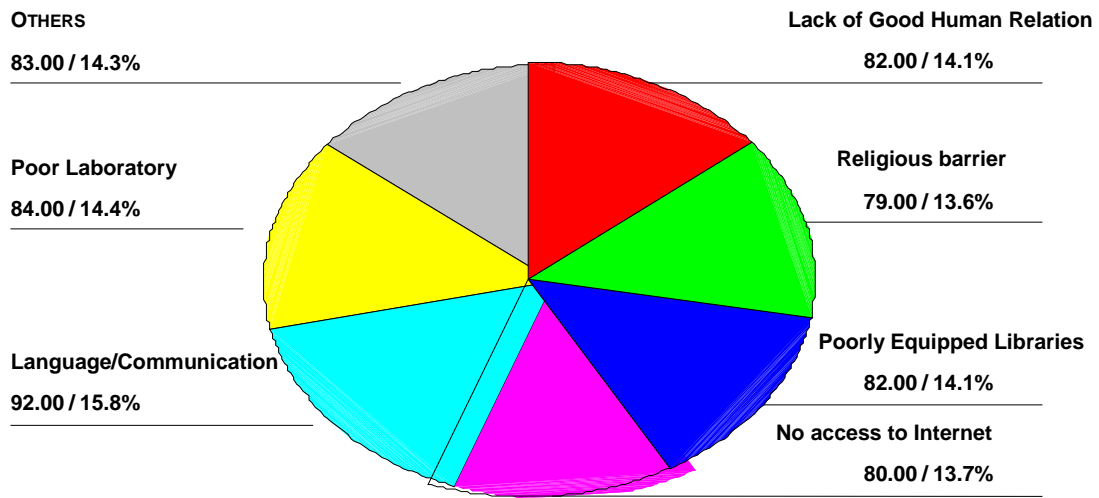


Figure 4: Showing problems militating against access and use of information

Figure 4 above shows that among some of the problems militating against effective access and utilization of information by nurses and midwives in Yola. Specialist hospital are language barrier 92 (15.8%), lack of functional laboratories 84(14.4%),

lack of good human relation 82 (14.1%), lack of functional libraries 82 (14.1%), lack of access to internet services 80 (13.7%), religious barrier 79 (13.6%) and others 83 (14.3%).

CONCLUSION

It is very evident that nurses and midwives access and utilized information in the course of discharging their duties. This information is usually obtained through the patients and their relatives and other sources. The information are mainly used for counseling and treatment, while the 61.5% of the nurses are not computer literate and lack access to internet services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The hospitals should organize an intensive capacity building training for Nurses and Midwives to enhance their skills.
2. There is need to provide functional and modern library in the hospital for the staff to keep abreast with happenings across the globe.
3. There is the need for the government to periodically upgrade the laboratories for efficient and effective services.
4. There is also the need to allow the staff to attend training both national and at international levels if need be.

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