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LEVEL OF USE OF INFORMATION ON HEALTH LITERACY BY HEPATITIS PATIENTS IN SPECIALIST HOSPITALS IN NORTH-CENTRAL, NIGERIA

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Abstract
The study investigated the level and use of information on health literacy by hepatitis patients in specialist hospitals in North-central, Nigeria. The study was guided by two objectives and two corresponding research questions. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The total population for the study was 1,700 hepatitis patients and 20 medical librarians in the specialist hospitals studied. The sample size of the population was 313 drawn from Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table for determining the sample size of a population. Questionnaire and observation checklist were the instruments used for data collection. 313 copies of questionnaire administered, 254 copies were filled, returned and used for the analysis. Descriptive statistical tool involving frequency counts and percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the data. The findings of the study revealed that no library irrespective of the type or kind can achieve its goals and objectives of meeting the information needs of users without the provision of adequate and current information resources as well as effective and efficient service delivery. Factors such as inadequate number of librarians, insufficient current information resources, lack of awareness of resources and services rendered by the specialist hospitals to mention but a few were major factors confronting the level of health literacy among hepatitis patients. It was recommended that, the management of specialist hospitals should encourage the high use of library by hepatitis patients through provision of Internet services and current information resources, hepatitis patients should use the information provided to know how hepatitis is controlled, go for routine check-ups and improve their health status as well as take care of the drugs and avoid transmitting the virus to others.

Keywords: Use, Information, Hepatitis patient, Health literacy, Specialist hospitals

Introduction

Health literacy is a concept that relatively deals with possessing the ability to identify the health information needs on how to locate and use information. The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2012) refers to health literacy as the concept of an individual's cognitive and social skills which determine the motivation and ability to gain access to, understand, and use information in ways to promote and maintain good health. In this way, health literacy holds greater value beyond an ability to read pamphlets and successfully set appointments. Increased health literacy is essential for empowerment which in turn might result in liberated personal, social, and cultural development.

Ultimately, this might result in enhanced health behaviours (Ajuwon, 2015). The definition of functional health literacy includes a basic abilities required to navigate a health care system (Squiers, Peinado, Berkman, Boudewyns and McCormack, 2012). Researchers have discovered in the last decade that health literacy strongly predicts health status, more so than socioeconomic status, age, or ethnicity (Dubow, 2011).

Several national and international organisations such as World Health Organisation (WHO) have promoted health literacy as a research priority (WHO, 2010).Others like National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Hospitals, Primary Health Centres and Libraries are institutions that support health literacy programmes through campaign and provision of relevant health information to the people.

Libraries as an institution that play major roles in information provisions (Ogunsola, 2011) should be at the fore front in health literacy. In other words, the services provided by the library should pervades all sectors of life including the provision and dissemination of information on healthy living especially on what could improve the health and wellbeing of hepatitis patients. Libraries should offer guidance to community members on diverse needs related to learning about health and health care. They should provide services that enhance access to health science and also sought research regarding medical development and clinical trials for better services. Special libraries provide specialised information resources on a particular subject for their clienteles (Shumaker, 2011). The special library which includes those found in specialist hospitals are designed to assist physicians, health professionals, medical students, patients and medical researchers in locating health and scientific information to improve, update, access and evaluate health care services. Uzohue and Yaya (2016) opined that special libraries in health organisations are set up to take care and meet the information needs of professional health workers within and outside the organisations that are saddled with the responsibilities of providing health care services to patients visiting the health centers.

Health and wellness information is made accessible by librarians through variety of media by building and maintaining carefully created (physical and digital) collection. Libraries offer health information seekers high quality resources on a full range of topics. While focused on serving the information needs of medical professionals, librarians in specialist hospitals also provide collections for use by patients and their families, including videos that teach methods of home care for chronic condition diseases such as hepatitis. Libraries do not only provide access to high quality health information, but also help people build the health literacy skills needed to navigate health information (Malachowski, 2011).

Hepatitis virus is a serious burden that causes potential life- threatening inflammation of the liver, which is characterized by acute and chronic forms of liver disease. According to World Health Organisation (WHO) (2013) global health report of viral hepatitis more than 240 million population were affected by chronic liver disease. The liver is a vital organ that process nutrients, filters the blood, and fights infections.

When the liver is inflamed or damaged, its function can be affected. Hepatitis which is an inflammation of the liver can lead to a condition which can be self-limiting or can progress to fibrosis (scaring), cirrhosis or liver cancer (WHO, 2013).

Many Nigerians are living with the life-threaten disease which they are not aware of due to the fact that viral hepatitis is a silent killer. Many a time it does not manifest any symptom on the patients until later when the liver has started getting damaged. Some individuals when suffering the disease ignore to go for treatment for fear of stigmatization. They are not aware that this viral hepatitis can be controlled and managed like other diseases, if detected on time.

Awareness as a variable is necessary for prevention of hepatitis disease. It can play important roles on the health of many Nigerians living with this disease. Ogholikhan, et al. (2016) indicated that awareness is the ability to directly know and perceive, to feel or to be cognisant of a particular events. Lack of awareness has caused many patients to leave with this viral hepatitis for a long time that drugs could no longer work on them and their liver would damage to the extent that would result to liver transplant, costing millions of naira. Many people are hepatitis virus carrier, but are ignorant of the symptoms, treatment, and how to manage it. In the same vein, many are aware of their current health status, but are ignorant on how to access relevant and current health information tailored to their needs (WHO, 2017).

Another variable needed for health literacy with emphasis to hepatitis disease is information dissemination. Dissemination of information is an important function that should be properly and professionally handled, especially in a predominantly illiterate and large rural populated country like Nigeria (World Bank, 2011). Disseminating health information can improve knowledge transfer from librarians and health professionals to hepatitis patients and others alike that will help maintain and improve their health and other diseases that could be life threatening.

With the advent of Information and Communication Technology (I C T), Obasola and Mabawonku (2018) opined that the dissemination of health information is a strategy for preventing pregnancy abnormalities, birth complications and preventions of diseases. Ferguson, Davis and Brown (2013) showed that the information method seemed to have little impact on health outcome. In this 21st century various channels of disseminating information to patients on health issues are available everywhere. It is paramount to note that the value of any specialist library lies in the effective utilization of its information resources available to the community/users it serves. Librarians as custodians of information can play an important role in creating awareness, disseminate information and encourage the public to use information and this will serve as preventive measures to hepatitis patients thereby boost their level of health literacy. It is on this basis that the study tends to carry out the assessment of awareness, use and information dissemination to hepatitis patients for health literacy by librarians in specialist hospitals in North-central, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The awareness of information resources for hepatitis patients in specialist hospitals in Nigeria is a critical concern for health literacy. Limited access to relevant and accurate information may hinder patients' understanding of their condition and available treatments, potentially impacting their overall health outcomes. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach to enhance awareness and provide accessible, culturally relevant information to empower patients in managing their health effectively.

Based on the aforementioned, it is important to stress that special libraries through various Information and Communication Technology (ICT) media can create awareness in this study area to enable the public to see reasons why they need to know their hepatitis status. This is in line with the first Nigeria hepatitis summit (2018) which number one goal was to: "Improve health seeking behaviour among Nigerians through disease awareness and as more people become aware of the disease, it will help them discover their status and encourage them to seek treatment as appropriate."

Librarians as custodians of information can play an important role which will serve as preventive measures to hepatitis patients thereby boost their level of health literacy. It is on this basis that the study tends to assess the level and use of information provided to hepatitis patients for health literacy by librarians in specialist hospitals in North-central, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

1. Determine the factors affecting the level of health literacy among the hepatitis patients in North-central, Nigeria.
2. Find out how hepatitis patients use information disseminated for health literacy by librarians in specialist hospitals in North-central, Nigeria.

Research Question

1. What are the factors affecting the level of health literacy among the hepatitis patients in North-central, Nigeria.
2. How is hepatitis patients use information disseminated for health literacy by librarians in specialist hospitals in North-central, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The Health Belief Model is a theory that attempts to explain health-seeking behavior by examining how people perceive disease severity, their likelihood of contracting that disease, the benefits of taking preventive action, and the cost of taking preventive action (Strecher and Rosenstock, 1997).Emphatically, Rosenstock (1974) postulated that Health Belief Model (HBM) was developed in the 1950's to explain the reason why people do not engage in health related programs to detect and prevent diseases even when it is free of charge and the services usually within their reach. This

study will adopt this theory because the theory equally attributes to hepatitis patients who do not see the need to participate in health programs and treatment despite the fact that they are vulnerable to this killer disease.

Factors Affecting the Level of Health Literacy among the Hepatitis Patients

In Nigeria, certain issues affect the extent to which information is disseminated by librarians in the specialist hospitals to hepatitis patients in order to affect their level of health literacy. Among these are:

Cost / Funding: Though the cost of maintaining e-library in any type of library is high, it is even more risky maintaining the status quo. Librarians including those working in the specialist hospitals cannot afford to remain where they are, it is either they adapt to new trends or perish. *Achala, and Sinha (2010*) opined that the greatest challenge facing libraries in Nigeria is that of funding. The provision of improved, effective, efficient and sustainable information services, as well as access to a wide array of knowledge and information sources in the face of dwindling funding is not feasible. Funds are needed to cater for a whole range of services in the library of the 21st century, yet government subventions in the education and health sectors are not adequate (Emezie and Nwaohiri, 2013). This affects the rate at which information can be disseminated by librarians to their users particularly those vulnerable to one disease infection or the other. This no doubt validates the fact that fund is a prerequisite for effective management of specialist libraries in the digital age.

Resistance to changes: Change as popularly said is inevitable. According to *Acheampong (2012*) change is a phenomenon that is inevitable for progress. It is not easily accepted in any society because of fear of the unknown. They are not sure of what change may bring to their profession. Resistance to changes in libraries will limit the extent that librarians can go in managing their libraries and also satisfying the information needs of their users particularly those living with hepatitis.

Lack of well-defined ICT policy: Enweani (2018) opined that libraries in Nigeria are yet to come up with uninformed ICT-based service policy. This can be seen as the same with special libraries such as those in the specialist hospitals. Such policy will articulate what is required for sustainable ICT-based library services in the digital environment, areas of digital library services to be given top priorities, ICT training need of library staff and strategic plan to ensure continuous maintenance of ICT facilities. According to Uchechukwu (2018) most university libraries in Nigeria do not have a well-defined ICT-policy to guide and regulate the application of ICT to library services delivery. There is need to address pertinent issues relating to the expediency of ICT training needs of librarians, the nature of ICT-based library services, the ratio of library allocation that should go into ICT-based library services.

Poor internet connectivity: In the 21st century libraries, the Internet play a vital role in providing information on Hepatitis diseases but equitable access to the Internet in Nigerian libraries is yet to be realised as Olabude (2007) opined that there are many constraints that are leading to the poor Internet development in Africa. One of these is the initial capital outlay to install Internet facilities. Olabude (2007) added that the constraints to the poor Internet connectivity in Africa can be seen as a result of huge depts and foreign exchange rates required in purchasing the facilities. Chigbu and Dim (2012) opined that there is no efficient telecommunication and power supply base: to serve as spring board for the development of Internet services in Africa. The Internet is seen as a store house of current and relevant information use by many including hepatitis patients to satisfy their queries. As such, poor Internet connectivity prevents Hepatitis Patients from gaining access to current researches and publications on hepatitis diseases, hepatitis drugs as well as how best to prevent the disease.

Use of Information Vis a Vis Health Literacy: The major aim of every library is for it to satisfy the information needs of the clientele. Hepatitis patients are not an exception and the availability of information resources in the library are the key variables that facilitate information use. Hepatitis patients' use of library is another variable that influences their level of health Literacy. Cox and Janti (2012) identified use of information as an activity which measures the worth of an item in a library or any organisation. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the more hepatitis patients use the specialist hospital library, the more familiar the hepatitis patients will be with its resources, including its electronic resources and this would positively influence their health Literacy level.

Adeleke and Nwalo (2017) believed that awareness is an integral part of availability which in turn leads to utilization. The awareness of information resources indicates the extent to which hepatitis patients have adequate information and knowledge of the presence of print and electronic information resources in the library. Thus, if hepatitis patients use the library primarily as a quiet and convenient place to do research about their health, they may be aware of its resources, as compared to those who never set a foot in the library. Several studies have shown that hospital patients use the library mostly as a place to make photocopies, but do not make great use of some of the available library services, such as interlibrary loan and the reference desk (*Akpan-Atata and Enyene, 2014*). Ojowole and Oludipe (2017) in their study reveal that more than half, 52.2% of the respondents depended on their doctors for information, followed by their Mother-in-Laws 48.7%, while the least source of information is books/ magazines .This means that hepatitis patients do not use the library as they mostly use other sources of information and this would negatively affect their level of health Literacy.

Research Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The total population for the study was one thousand seven hundred (1,700) hepatitis patients and twenty (20)

medical librarians in the specialist hospitals studied. The sample size of the population was three hundred and thirteen (313) hepatitis patient drawn from Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table for determining the sample size of a population. Questionnaire and observation checklist were the instruments used for data collection. Out of three hundred and thirteen (313) copies of questionnaire administered, two hundred fifty four (254) copies were filled, returned and used for the analysis. Descriptive statistical tool involving frequency counts mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the data. State how decisions were arrived at in each case at least for mean.

Table 1: Response Rate by Hospitals Hepatitis Patient

S/N	Name of Specialist Hospitals	No. of Administered Questionnaire	No. of Returned Questionnaire	Percentage(s) (%)
1	Dalhatu Araf Specialist Hospital, Lafia Nassarawa State	115	105	91
2	Kogi State Specialist Hospital, Lokoja	100	83	83
3	Plateau State Specialist Hospital, Jos	98	66	67
	Total	**313**	**254**	**81**

Table 1: Demographic information of the respondents

RESULTS

Table 2: Factors Affecting the Level of Health Literacy among Hepatitis Patients

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	N	FX	x	STD	Decision
		4	3	2	1	254				
1	Inadequate information resources and services in the library	21	44	101	88	254	506	1.99	0.51	Disagreed
2	Inadequate awareness of information resources and services provided in the library	77	112	51	14	254	760	2.99	0.49	Agreed
3	Inadequate current information resources on hepatitis in the library	91	103	49	11	254	782	3.08	0.58	Agreed
4	Inadequate searching skills to search for information resources in the library	119	100	19	16	254	830	3.27	0.77	Agreed
5	Inadequate number of librarians available in the library	112	116	21	5	254	843	3.32	0.82	Agreed
6	Information resources on hepatitis in the library is not sufficient	95	120	30	9	254	809	3.19	0.69	Agreed

Key: Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly Disagreed (SD).

Table 2 above indicated that **factors affecting the level of health literacy among Hepatitis patients** are inadequate awareness of information resources and services provided in the library, inadequate current information resources on hepatitis in the library, inadequate searching skills to search for information resources in the library, inadequate number of librarians available in the library, information resources on hepatitis in the library is not sufficient. These were supported as respondent all agreed to their inadequacy as indicated in the table.

Table 3: Use of Information Disseminated by Librarians for Health Literacy among Hepatitis Patients

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	N	FX	x	STD	Decision
		4	3	2	1	254				
1	The information provided helps me to take my drugs	12	23	89	129	254	428	1.69	0.81	Disagreed
2	The information provided enhances my awareness on how hepatitis is transmitted	95	94	49	16	254	776	3.06	0.56	Agreed
3	The i nformation provided by librarians helps me to know how hepatitis is controlled	83	120	42	9	254	785	3.09	0.59	Agreed
4	The information provided enhances my knowledge on hepatitis	100	89	44	21	254	776	3.05	0.55	Agreed
5	The information provided improves my health status	27	48	75	104	254	506	1.99	0.51	Disagreed
6	The information provided helps me to avoid transmitting the virus to others	122	98	21	13	254	837	3.29	0.79	Agreed
7	The information provided helps me to always go for routine check-up	96	90	50	18	254	772	3.04	0.54	Agreed

Key: Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly Disagreed (SD).

Table 3 show that Hepatitis patients get more awareness on how hepatitis is transmitted, always go for routine check-up, know how to avoid transmitting the virus to others, have knowledge on hepatitis and how hepatitis is being controlled all as a result of the uses of information resources disseminated by librarians to them for their health literacy. Theses clear shows that there is significant relevant on the role of librarian and information they provided to their users especially the hepatitis patient in this regard.

Discussion

In line with the findings of objective 1, it is revealed that through information disseminated, hepatitis patients became more literate on how hepatitis is transmitted and controlled, things necessary to do in order to avoid transmitting the virus to others and provide clues on regular check-ups. These could go a long way in preventing hepatitis

and its spread in the study areas. This could be attributed to the fact that disseminating health information can help to improve knowledge transfer from medical librarians to hepatitis patients and they will be able to know the causes, treatment and preventive measures necessary to take in order to prevent hepatitis. This could be done through health education organised by librarians in conjunction with medical experts/practitioners to enlighten the hepatitis patients generally about hepatitis virus. This is in line Lizenberger (2016) who stated that libraries should organise seminars on health education, the education which will help people to change their behaviour and hence, combat hepatitis and other disease that could be bothering them. Similarly, Ogunsola (2011) opined that librarians should make sure they impact the knowledge of health literacy for combating hepatitis and other disease infection to health information consumers.

In response to objective 2, the study revealed that the respondents agreed with all the factors affecting the level of health literacy among hepatitis patients with the exception of item 1 as presented on Table 1. This could be as a result of inadequate funding of specialist hospital libraries to acquire the necessary resources and lack of employment of adequate staff for effective and efficient information service delivery. This is in line with the findings of Achala and Sinha (2010) that the greatest challenge facing libraries in Nigeria is that of funding. This indicated that the level of health literacy among hepatitis patients is negatively affected. As such, there should be provision of adequate and current information resources , awareness on existing information resources and service, employment of qualified librarians and ensuring that hepatitis patients are taught through library orientation how to search and access information resources for their needs.

Summary of Findings

1. Hepatitis patients indicated that factors such as inadequate awareness of information resources and services, inadequate current information resources on hepatitis, inadequate search skill and inadequate number of librarians were factors affecting their level of health literacy.
2. The study revealed that hepatitis patients use the information provided to always go for routine check-up, know how to avoid transmitting the virus to others, and have knowledge on hepatitis and how it's being controlled.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of the study revealed that no library irrespective of the type or kind can achieve its goals and objectives of meeting the information needs of users without the provision of adequate and current information resources as well as effective and efficient service delivery. as Also, inadequate number of librarians, insufficient current information resources, lack of awareness of resources and services rendered by the specialist hospitals to mention but a few were major factors confronting the level of

health literacy among hepatitis patients in the studied areas .With these factors not given adequate attention, there would be little or no effective health literacy delivery by librarians to hepatitis patients necessary for the prevention and control of hepatitis spread in the areas studied.

Recommendations

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

1. The management of specialist hospitals should encourage the high use of library by hepatitis patients through provision of Internet services and current information resources.
2. The hepatitis patients should use the information provided to know how hepatitis is controlled, go for routine check-ups and improve their health status as well as take care of the drugs and avoid transmitting the virus to other**s.**

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