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TABLE OF CONTENTS

GENERAL INFORMATION	IC
INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS	1F
EDITORIAL NOTE:	
From Research to Reform: Advancing Healthcare Excellence through Enhanced Quality and Innovation – <i>G. E. Erhabor</i>	985
ORIGINAL ARTICLES	
Relationship between Tinnitus and Hearing Loss among Elderly Patients in Lagos State, Nigeria	987
C. N. Asoegwu, E. C. Osuji, O. O. Kanu, C. C. Nwawolo	
Shifting Paradigms: Assessing Gambian Medical Students' Perceptions of Dermatology and Dermatologists	993
C. C. Anaje, N. A. Enechukwu, D. E. Malachy, G. O. Ogun	
Plasma Glucagon-Like Peptide-1 Levels in Nigerians with Newly Diagnosed Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus: A Cross-Sectional Study	1000
U. F. Abdullahi, A. E. Uloko, A. B. Girei, U. A. Abdullahi, Z. H. Amin, M. T. Umar, M. A. Saad, M. Babageidam, K. S. Sidi, M. A. Ramalan, I. D. Gezawa	
Clients' Satisfaction with Quality of Care among Health-Insured and Non-Insured Diabetic Patients in Kaduna State, Northwest Nigeria	1007
Z. S. Babandi, A. G. Suleiman, F. A. Saulawa, M. B. Sufiyan, M. B. Jibril, A. Lawal, S. H. Idris, A. T. Aliyu	
The Effects of Varying Doses of Magnesium-Sulphate on Succinylcholine-Induced Fasciculation and Postoperative Muscle Pain in A Nigerian Population	1015
A. K. Ojo, M. O. Ikokoh, T. A. Ojumu, O. E. Ayegbusi, T. A. Owoniya	
Relationship Between Average Keratometric (AK) Readings and Axial Length (AL) Measurements in A Sub-Saharan African Population	1023
O. Oderinlo, T. Bogunjoko, A. Hassan, M. Olowolaiyemo, A. Akinye	
Colonoscopy Experience in a Private Hospital in Nigeria	1028
N. J. Nwashilli, E. L. Bamgboye, I. Dozie, T. Ojeola	
Safety Evaluation of NutriMeal Products using Animal Model	1034
O. O. Aina, O. Ajibaye, O. K. Kareem, D. J. Bamgbose, C. O. Okoyenta, S. K. Akindele, B. L. Salako	
Fertility Desire of Women with Obstetric Fistula in Northwest Nigeria	1054
H. Adeoti, O. C. Uchendu, O. O. Olabumuyi, E. A. Oyewole	
REVIEW ARTICLE	
Review of Obstructive Sleep Apnea and the Peri-Operative Management of Patients in a Resource-Limited Setting	1066
A. K. Ojo, M. A. Komolafe, T. A. Ojumu, A. S. Raji, O. I. Aaron, A. O. Adetoye	
INDEX TO VOLUME 41, NO. 10, 2024	
Author Index	1079
Subject Index	1080



FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

From Research to Reform: Advancing Healthcare Excellence through Enhanced Quality and Innovation

We are delighted to welcome all readers, authors, reviewers, and stakeholders to yet another important issue of the *West Africa Journal on Medicine*. It features a diverse spectrum of articles, reflecting the wide-ranging aspects of medicine—from infectious diseases and non-communicable diseases to advancements in medical technologies and health policy. The variety of topics covered provides a comprehensive view of the dynamic and evolving nature of healthcare in West Africa. The articles underscore the significant challenges facing Africa's healthcare landscape, alongside the potential and opportunities for growth and improvement. We are grateful for the opportunity to remain engaged in the ongoing dialogue surrounding the improvement of healthcare in the region, and we sincerely appreciate the contributions and participation of all our stakeholders in this collective journey.

One important issue I would like to emphasize is the role of patient satisfaction surveys and their potential to drive improvements in the quality of healthcare delivery. Babandi et al. conducted a comparative study on client satisfaction with the quality of care among health-insured and non-insured diabetic patients. The study assessed various factors such as care quality, communication, financial aspects, and accessibility. The results showed no significant difference in overall satisfaction between insured and non-insured patients. However, non-insured patients were more satisfied with interpersonal communication, while

insured patients valued financial relief. The study emphasizes that, while financial alleviation is a major benefit of health insurance, patient satisfaction is also heavily influenced by the quality of interpersonal contacts and service accessibility. It underscores the importance of addressing bureaucratic inefficiencies and enhancing provider-patient communication. There is a need for improved interpersonal interactions, better service delivery, and reforms in the health insurance system to enhance patient experiences.

In many advanced countries, regular evaluations of patient satisfaction are practiced, providing healthcare institutions with critical insights that drive improvements across various facets of care. This process not only enhances the quality of service but also fosters a patient-centered approach that is essential in today's healthcare environment.¹ When healthcare facilities gather and analyze feedback, they can identify specific areas that need attention. Patients' responses often highlight issues related to communication between providers and patients, waiting time, and comfort. Addressing these concerns leads to more efficient services, higher-quality treatment outcomes, and a better overall healthcare experience for patients. Integral to this is the shift towards patient-centered care, a core principle of modern healthcare. Listening to patient feedback allows healthcare providers to understand individual needs more clearly, ensuring that care is tailored to the unique preferences of each patient.²

Another significant benefit of patient satisfaction surveys is enhanced patient retention and loyalty. When patients feel valued and cared for, they are more likely to return to the healthcare facility for future treatment and recommend it to others.³ Understanding the factors that influence patient retention—such as ease of appointment scheduling, staff professionalism, and waiting times—helps institutions improve the patient experience. Institutions that actively engage with patient feedback and implement meaningful changes are more likely to build lasting relationships with their patients, fostering loyalty and encouraging positive word-of-mouth.^{3,4} Furthermore, assessing patient satisfaction plays a vital role in compliance with healthcare standards and regulations. It serves as an indicator of the institution's commitment to maintaining or improving its quality standards. Regulatory bodies in the developed world often mandate the collection of patient satisfaction data to ensure that healthcare services meet specific benchmarks. Institutions that regularly assess patient satisfaction are not only more likely to meet or exceed these standards but also cultivate a culture of continuous improvement and excellence.¹

The impact of patient satisfaction extends beyond the quality of care—it also has significant financial implications. Satisfied patients are more likely to return for treatment, which contributes to repeat business and attracts new patients. Additionally, positive patient experiences reduce the risk of lawsuits or negative publicity,

both of which can have costly consequences for healthcare institutions. Moreover, patients who are satisfied with their care are more likely to follow through with prescribed treatments and attend follow-up appointments, leading to better health outcomes and fewer readmissions. This cycle of improved outcomes and loyalty translates into more sustainable financial performance for healthcare providers.⁵

Regular assessment of patient satisfaction drives continuous improvement and innovation.^{1,6} The healthcare industry is constantly evolving, and patient expectations are no exception. By consistently collecting and reviewing patient feedback, healthcare institutions can stay ahead of emerging trends and adapt to changing needs. Patient satisfaction surveys often provide valuable insights into unmet needs and areas for improvement, which can inspire the adoption of new technologies, processes, and care practices. This proactive approach ensures that institutions remain adaptable and innovative, ultimately enhancing the overall patient experience. Therefore, the ongoing evaluation of patient satisfaction is not just a tool for measuring performance; it is a cornerstone of quality care. By focusing on patient feedback, healthcare providers can improve care delivery, foster loyalty, boost financial outcomes, and continue to innovate. This commitment to listening and responding to patient needs is essential for creating a healthcare system that truly prioritizes the well-being of those it serves.

In some of the other articles in this edition, Abdullahi et al. reported fasting and postprandial GLP-1 levels among newly diagnosed Nigerians with T2DM compared to healthy subjects and underscored the role of incretin-

based therapies in the management of these patients. Asoegwu and colleagues explored tinnitus among elderly Nigerians, revealing a prevalence of 20.1%, predominantly associated with sensorineural hearing loss while Adeoti et al examined fertility desires among women with obstetric fistulas in Northwest Nigeria, revealing that cultural norms, family influence, and stigma significantly impact their experiences and advocated for comprehensive care including fertility counselling. A review by Ojo et al examined the diagnosis, anaesthesia concerns, optimisation, and perioperative management of OSA in poorly resourced settings and emphasized the need for tailored anaesthetic strategies and healthcare training to mitigate perioperative risks in African populations.

We extend our gratitude to our authors for their insightful contributions. Your dedication to advancing medical research and your commitment to addressing the unique health challenges of West Africa are invaluable. The research, reviews, and case studies you share help to illuminate critical issues in the fields of infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, health policy, and medical innovation, offering hope and solutions for the future. To our reviewers, thank you for your time, expertise, and constructive feedback. Your commitment ensures that the journal maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and quality. Together, we can foster a stronger, more resilient healthcare system that improves lives across the region. We hope this edition serves as both a source of knowledge and a call to action as we work towards a healthier, more sustainable future for West Africa.

Professor G. E. Erhabor

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