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FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Enhancing Health Services Delivery and Patient Satisfaction through Improved Access and Quality of Care

Welcome to the latest edition of the West African Journal of Medicine (WAJM). This issue presents a wide range of articles with crucial insights and findings that shed light on the multifaceted landscape of healthcare in our region. From addressing the burden of surgical conditions to enhancing access to critical screening services and understanding the key determinants of patient satisfaction, each article encapsulates the spirit of innovation and dedication driving the advancement of healthcare in West Africa. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to our esteemed authors, reviewers, and readers whose unwavering support and engagement continue to propel our journal forward.

The study "Prevalence of Common Surgical Conditions Amongst Adults in Nigeria," by Bankole and colleagues highlights the burden of surgical conditions within the population, offering invaluable insights for policymakers and healthcare providers. The community-based approach adopted in the study provided a more accurate reflection of the true burden of these conditions, as it addresses the limitations of the traditional reliance on hospital-based records. The survey encompassed 856 households, yielding data from 1,992 adults. The results revealed a prevalence rate of 5%, with acquired deformities and open wounds or sores being the most commonly reported conditions.

As highlighted by the authors, the findings underscore a significant public health challenge i.e. the limited surgical

workforce relative to the population in need, which is a critical barrier to achieving equitable and adequate healthcare. Strengthening healthcare services and infrastructure is therefore crucial and this calls for targeted interventions. Preventive measures and public health initiatives should be intensified to reduce the incidence of acquired surgical conditions. Community education on injury prevention, early diagnosis, and prompt treatment can help mitigate the burden of diseases including surgical conditions. Policymakers must prioritize the expansion of healthcare services and workforce development based on adequate data to ensure a sustainable healthcare system. There is a need to provide incentives for surgeons and other healthcare workers to work in underserved regions. (1)

In another study that retrospectively evaluated mammographic examinations at a private cancer foundation in Abuja, North Central Nigeria, Itanyi et al underscored the importance of mammographic screening in improving breast health outcomes. Despite its effectiveness, access to mammography and the quality of breast care services continue to be marred by substantial disparities. (2) The study highlights the role of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in bridging this gap. One of the most compelling findings is that more than half (52.7%) of the women had undergone at least one previous mammogram. This indicates a positive trend towards repeat screenings, which are vital for early detection and timely intervention. Screening was the primary indication for mammography in 63.9% of the women, while 36.1% presented with symptoms such as breast pain (59.6%) and breast lumps (26.3%).

This study brings to light the ongoing need for comprehensive public health strategies to ensure wider access to mammographic and other screening services. Policymakers and healthcare providers must collaborate to expand these services, integrate them into the national healthcare system, and ensure sustainability. Investment in training healthcare professionals, upgrading diagnostic facilities, and increasing public awareness about the benefits of health screening are essential steps toward achieving this goal. The importance of early detection of health problems through appropriate screenings cannot be overstated, ultimately contributing to better health outcomes.

The vital need for easy accessibility and convenience of healthcare services was underscored by Butawa and co-authors in their study which assessed patients' satisfaction with services provided at a secondary healthcare facility. The study revealed that general satisfaction among respondents was 60.5%, indicating that while the majority of patients were satisfied, there is substantial room for improvement. Several key predictors of satisfaction emerged from the study. These include affordability, amount of time spent with doctors, effective communication, and the accessibility and convenience of the services. These domains are crucial touchpoints in the

patient experience and warrant focused attention to enhance satisfaction levels. Patient satisfaction is indeed a cornerstone of effective healthcare delivery. Satisfied patients are more likely to adhere to medical advice and follow prescribed treatments thereby improving overall health outcomes. (3) As we strive to improve healthcare delivery, patient satisfaction must remain a vital focus, driving efforts to create a more effective, responsive, and compassionate healthcare system.

In the same vein, I welcome the guest editorial article, which sheds insightful illumination on the studies centered around health-seeking behaviour and outcomes among patients with stroke and epilepsy, respectively. This editorial contribution sought to deepen our understanding of the nuanced challenges and outcomes faced by these patient populations, offering perspectives for advancing healthcare strategies and interventions.

In conclusion, the studies highlighted emphasize the need for a multifaceted approach to enhance healthcare service delivery and patient satisfaction. The achievement of improved health outcomes requires the expansion of affordable, albeit, quality healthcare services, especially to underserved areas, investment in medical education, and workforce development. Collaborative efforts between policymakers,

healthcare providers, and nongovernmental organizations will be pivotal in creating a sustainable and equitable healthcare system that meets the needs of all individuals. These efforts will contribute to a more effective, equitable, and compassionate healthcare system, ultimately leading to improved public health.

Once again, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our stakeholders -editors, reviewers, authors, staff, and readers-whose dedication and contributions remain the backbone of this journal's success. Your tireless efforts in providing rigorous reviews, submitting high-quality research, and engaging with the published content are indispensable to the achievement of our collective mission. We encourage prospective authors to continue considering the West African Journal of Medicine as the premier platform for disseminating their valuable research. Your contributions are vital in driving forward the knowledge and practice that underpin improved health outcomes across our region.

Despite the prevailing socio-economic challenges, WAJM remains steadfast in our commitment to excellence. We will continue to strive to provide prompt, high-quality services to all our contributors and readers. Together, with your ongoing support and engagement, we will propel our shared goal of

advancing the frontiers of quality in scientific inquiry and scholarship for the betterment of healthcare and society.

Professor G. E. Erhabor

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Transforming Neurological Health Outcomes in West Africa: A Focus on Epilepsy and Stroke

The healthcare landscape in Nigeria is evolving, reflecting broader global trends in managing neurological conditions. This editorial synthesizes insights from recent studies on epilepsy and acute stroke, highlighting shifts in health-seeking behaviors and the persistent challenges in managing these conditions.

Both studies underscore the importance of public health education, the need for targeted interventions, and the critical role of timely medical care in improving patient outcomes.

Evolving Health-Seeking Behaviors in Epilepsy

Epilepsy, a predilection for recurrent unprovoked seizures, is a neurological disorder that affects millions of people across the globe. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), epilepsy affects approximately 50 million people worldwide, making it one of the most common neurological diseases globally.