Inter Professional Teamwork in Public Organizations, A Paradigm Shift to Crisis in Nigerian Hospitals

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ABSTRACT

Inter professional teamwork in Hospitals is where various Professionals such as Doctors, Pharmacists, Medical Laboratory Scientists, Medical Laboratory Technicians, Medical Laboratory Assistants, Nurses, Physiotherapists, Radiographers, Health Information Officers, Human Resources Managers, etc. work together with patients, care givers, families and communities to deliver the highest quality of care. Healthcare is becoming more complex and specialized forcing medical staff categories to attempt complicated health services and quickly learn new methods through teamwork. Team cohesiveness with trust among the various professionals should be highly encouraged especially in Nigeria as it would go a long way to solve some healthcare crisis. Notably, improved Patients' outcomes in terms of satisfactory diagnosis, treatment and attention would improve due to professional collaboration and teamwork in hospitals towards healthcare delivery in Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Inter professional teamwork in Hospitals is where various Professionals such as Doctors, Pharmacists, Medical Laboratory Scientists, Medical Laboratory Technicians, Medical Laboratory Assistants, Nurses, Physiotherapists, Radiographers, Health Information Officers, Human Resources Managers, etc. work together with patients, care givers, families and communities to deliver the highest quality of care. Healthcare is becoming more complex and specialized forcing medical staff categories to attempt complicated health services and quickly learn new methods through teamwork. Team cohesiveness with trust among the various professionals should be highly encouraged especially in Nigeria as it would go a long way to solve some healthcare crisis. Notably, improved Patients' outcomes in terms of satisfactory diagnosis, treatment and attention would improve due to professional collaboration and teamwork in hospitals towards healthcare delivery in Nigeria.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2016a) defined inter professional teamwork or collaboration as a situation where; "multiple health workers from different professional backgrounds work together with patients, care givers, families and communities to deliver the highest quality of care". This is essential in a situation where health care professionals assume complementary roles and cooperatively working together, sharing responsibilities for problem solving, and making decisions to formulate and carry out plans for patients' care.

Crises within the healthcare workforce have been reported as perhaps the biggest constraints towards global health system development and sustenance particularly in Africa (Dorlo, 2017) and in Nigerian hospitals in particular. According to WHO,(2016b), report, 57 countries were in severe health workforce crisis. Nigeria as a giant and the most populous country in Africa possibly contribute even more to these crises in the region.

Available evidence, however, suggests that unlike in the developed world, healthcare professionals do not collaborate well in Nigeria because of the claim of superiority of a particular health professional conflict which is threatening to tear the health sector apart at the detriment of the patients (Disu & Obeta, 2018).

Furthermore, the Nigerian healthcare sector is relatively weak and there is no coordination response across the country. A number of healthcare crises have been reported in recent

times due to several month salaries owed, poor welfare, lack of appropriate health facilities and emerging factions among health workers. Poor administrations and responses across different levels of government have played contributory roles to further internalize crises among healthcare workers with different factions engaged in protracted supremacy challenges. These crises have consequently prevented optimal healthcare delivery to the Nigerian population (Adeloye *et al*., 2017) which is evident in the WHO health system rating of 187 out of 191 countries in the past 18 years (WHO, 2016a) and has immensely contributes to the underdevelopment of Nigerian healthcare industries.

Healthcare systems are significantly under-resourced in most countries and as a result are unable to respond as effectively as often needed to unforeseen crises such as infectious diseases, epidemics with consequent compromise to the quality of healthcare globally. This is worse in sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria in particular where there is severe shortage of well-trained staff, owing to poor remuneration, internal and external migration of health workers and inadequately employed schemes. Moreover, strikes amongst healthcare workers are rare events in most countries, but in Nigeria, it seems to be a custom where a year cannot pass without records of healthcare professionals' strikes /crises. In recent years, there has been an increasing number of healthcare worker strikes across the nation, some are national, others states or local government based. (Obeta & Disu, 2018)

Therefore, this paper provides an insight into a rapidly changing developing economy with a weak national health system governance and shortage of human resources for health of which teamwork of professionals found in healthcare especially in Nigerian hospitals can create a difference.

II. TERMINOLOGIES DESCRIBING INTERPROFESSIONAL TEAMWORK

Nancarrow and colleagues (2003) terminologies describing inter professional teamwork include; inter professional, multi professional, interdisciplinary, multi- disciplinary. These termino- logies are used in describing the teamwork of health, but the most frequently used is the multi- disciplinary.

- Inter professional refers to the development of cohesive practice between professionals from different disciplines, it involves continuous interaction and knowledge sharing between professionals, all while seeking to optimize patients' participation.
- Multi professional refers to the structural components of a team.
- Inter- disciplinary: this is when a team integrates its various disciplinary perspectives and maintains a network of cooperation and communication.it also refers to the collaboration among health care providers with specialized knowledge from multiple disciplines.
- Multi-disciplinary: this is the most frequently used in the healthcare system. It is defined as the team care coordinated by a leader who takes responsibility for overall patient care. Members contribute views and recommendations according to their particular expertise which may be integrated by the leader.

III. THE NEEDS FOR INTER PROFESSIONAL TEAMWORK

The need for inter professional teamwork is increasing as a result of some factors according to Nancarrow *et al*., (2003) which includes:

- Aging population with frail older people and large numbers of patients with more complex needs.
- The increased complexity of skills and knowledge requires to provide comprehensive care to the patients.
- Increasing specialization within health professions and a corresponding fragmentation of disciplinary knowledge resulting in no-one health care professional being able to meet all the complex needs of their patient.
- The current emphasis in many countries' policy documents on multi professional teamwork and development of shared learning.

- The pursuit of continuity of care within the move towards continuous quality improvement.

Teamwork becomes an important health intervention for a number of reasons. Clinical care is becoming more complex and specialized forcing medical staff to attempt complicated health services and quickly learn new methods. Aging populations, the increase of chronic disease such as cancer, diabetes and heart diseases have forced medical staff to take a multidisciplinary approach to health. (Mickan, 2005; Okoronkwo *et al.*, 2013).

Researchers have found that working together reduces the number of medical errors and increases patient safety (Baker, 2005). Teamwork also reduces issues that lead to burnout. No longer is one person responsible for the patient's health, today, an entire team of health workers come together to coordinate a patient's well-being (WHO, 2010). Health can help teams to break hierarchy and centralizes power of health organizations and hospitals thereby giving more leverage to health workers (Carvolho, 2014) for better outcome.

Teamwork is based on solid communicating patients and their families sometimes to feel more at ease and report. They accept treatments and feel more satisfied with their health care (Mickan, 2012). The teamwork significantly reduces workloads, increases job satisfaction and retention, improves patient satisfaction and reduces morbidity (Virani, 2012).

IV. TEAMS DYNAMICS AND TEAM FORMATION

Building an effective team is necessary for creating an appropriate organizational environment (Feder, 2011). Bruce Tuckman has described four main stages of team development which includes; forming, storming, norming and performing. Later, a fifth stage of adjourning/transforming was added (Tuckman, 1965):

- The forming is the initial phase of team building where members are coming together with uncertainty about their roles, norms, rules and expectations from them.
- The next step is storming where members tend to get into competitiveness, defensiveness, jealousy and conflict over roles and personalities; members may become critical of the leader and of each other.
- In norming, members get to know each other, agree on the norms, working style and system to follow.
- In performing, the team works with a positive and creative attitude to achieve the goals set before them.
- Finally, in adjourning, after completion of the team tasks, members bring a sense of closure and bonding between members. Most experts in team development agree that teams go through each stage will depend on the team members, their individual skills, the work they are expected to do, and the type of leadership available to the team.

V. TEAMWORK IN HEALTHCARE

Teamwork in health care is defined as two or more people who interact interdependently with a common purpose, working towards measurable goals that benefits from leadership that maintains stability while encouraging honest discussion and problem solving (Beatrice *et al.*, 2010). Researchers have found that integrating services among many health providers is a key component for better treatment of unhealthy populations and communities who have limited access to health care (Pinto, 2012.).

Teamwork in health care employs the practices of collaboration and enhanced communication to expand these traditional roles of health workers and to make decisions as a unit that works towards a common goal. Teamwork and collaboration are especially essential to care of patients in a decentralized health system with many levels of health workers. Health care is a

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multi- disciplinary profession in which doctors, nurses, pharmacists, laboratory scientists, health professionals from different specialists must work together, communicate often and share resources (Pinton, 2012; Manser, 2009).

Health teams are often made up of a variety of professional cadres in health care, each with specialized knowledge and responsible for different tasks. These multi-disciplinary teams are made up to solve health problems. Successful health teams strive to understand the patients' situation, ask probing questions about the problem, make an initial assessment and after discussion provide recommendations. Teams can also work together to develop health promotion for diverse communities and install disease prevention behaviors amongst patients. (Pinton, 2012; Mickan, 2005). Regrettably, inter professional teams seen in Nigerian hospitals is mostly the same profession team as put by Chukwuemeka and colleagues (2015) in South Eastern Nigeria tertiary hospital siting example of Obstetrics and Gynaecology team and Ward Nursing teams which are composed of single profession. Ogbonnaya (2019) posits inter professional that teamwork increases performance in healthcare and one would wonder what the improvement indices of Nigerian hospitals shall be with the medical teams existing currently in the hospitals where teams are made up of single profession having members of different grade levels with nomenclature "team".

VI. CATEGORIES OF TEAM IN HEALTHCARE IN NIGERIA

There are categories of individuals who act as members of an inter professional healthcare team. They tend to be core health professionals as Obeta and colleagues (2019) described with other support staff and they include:

1. The Medical Doctor: medical doctors as a group make decisions concerning the explicit goals of the health organization about the diagnosis and treatment of patients. (Onyekwere 2004). A qualified medical doctor is a person who has

undergone five to six years of professional training in a college of medicine in an accredited university as stipulated by the medical and dental council of Nigeria. Tucketts (2005), states that the profession has become the legitimate illness as the doctor has the right to certify someone's side of a particular disease or illness.

2. The Medical Laboratory Scientist: Medical laboratory scientist form an integral part of overall health services and have as part of their objectives the provision of results that are reliable, timely and interpretable. According to Ejilemele & Ojule (2004), without reliable laboratory support:

- Patients are less likely to receive the best possible care.
- Resistance to essential drugs will continue to spread.
- The source of disease may not be identified correctly.
- The spread of communicable disease will not be checked reliably.
- Valuable financial and human resources may be diverted to ineffective treatment and control.

3. The Pharmacist: the pharmacist is an expert in the field of medicinal products. The former president of the pharmaceutical society of Nigeria, stated that the pharmacist has a detailed knowledge of all aspects of medicine including formation, side effects and possible interactions. He/she is thus an important link in the process leading to a decision on the choice of medication for a patient. Once the decision of the physician has been made, there is a need for a team approach between the pharmacist and the nursing staff. This cooperation helps to ensure that no doubt exists in the minds of those who will administer the medication about the proper dosage, time of administration and other precautions to be taken. (Onyekwere, 2014)

4. The registered Nurse/ Midwife : the nurse/ midwife is an individual trained to care for the

sick and to render optimum care to a pregnant woman from the period of pregnancy through delivery. His/her role on the health care team is unique. The patient receives a high level of care though the physician prescribes the medical or surgical treatment for a patient, the nurse makes her own nursing diagnosis based on her knowledge of the nursing process and expertise, and develops a care plan.

5. Medical Laboratory Technician: MLSCN Act 2003 recognized this cadre of Medical Laboratory Profession as one who undergo a three years of Training and registered with the Council and permitted to work in the Laboratory a middle man power.

6. Medical Laboratory Assistant: MLSCN Act 2003 recognized this cadre in Medical Laboratory Profession as one who undergo a two year of Training and registered with the Council and permitted to work in the Laboratory as a lowest manpower.

NB: The Medical Laboratory Technician and Assistant as described in 5 and 6 above works under direct guidance and supervision of a Medical Laboratory Scientist.

7. Physiotherapists: According to An Act to establish the Medical Rehabilitation Therapists Registration Board [1988 No. 38.1], "medical rehabilitation therapist" or physiotherapist means any member of the profession; the Physiotherapy, Chiropractor, Occupational Therapy, Osteopathy or Speech Therapy and dully registered with the board.

8. Radiographers: According to the Radiographers Registration Board of Nigeria Act of 1987, a Radiographer is a person who is trained, qualified and registered to practice any or all the various aspects of the radiography profession. Radiography is a distinct health profession established by law.

9. Human resource managers: As managers, human resources carry out planning, organizing, staffing, direction and controlling of other health professionals in hospitals. Their operative functions includes- procurement, development/training, recruitment/selection, compensation, maintenance, motivation and integration/relations of all staff under them. This staff in a hospital certainly has the capacity to ensure teamwork in the hospitals.

Variety of health professionals in Nigeria as enumerated here can integrate a wide variety of skills, adopt creative methods in solving health problems, and achieve performance improvements for the hospitals.

VII. CHARACTERISTICS OF ADEQUATE TEAMWORK IN HEALTHCARE, A CASE FOR NIGERIAN HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATIONS

The characteristics of teamwork in line with Michelle & Alan (n.d) and Nancarrow *et al.*, (2013) includes:

- Good communication: Communication primarily referred to intrateam communication and included team members feeling as though they could listen as well as speak out within a team contact; and the ability to discuss and resolve difficulties with the team.
- Respecting and understanding roles: Importance of respecting and understanding the roles of other team members, these limitations and boundaries of each role were well understood and to have an understanding of how the roles have the potential to impact on patients.
- Appropriate skill mix: Skill mix refers to the mix and breadth of staff, personalities, individual attributes, professions and experience. Teams value diversity, and clearly need input from a range of staff who bring complementary experience and attributes to the team. Teams also felt that it was important to have the full complement of staff.
- Quality and outcomes of care: ensuring the quality and outcomes of care was identified as an important component of a good team and include severe reflective mechanisms both within and external to the team. This includes

suggestions that teams are able to reflect, accept criticism and act on it; have defined outcomes, follow up patients, provide feedback to other services.

- Leadership and management: all teams identified the importance of good leadership and the characteristics of a good are explored everywhere.

- Training and development opportunities: opportunities for gaining new knowledge, sharing knowledge, continuing professional development and education.

- Team culture (camaraderie and team support/relationships): The importance of team culture was the largest theme, with 66 items within this theme. Trust, mutual respect, reliability, commitment and support were the most commonly raised themes. But team culture included the importance of informal relationships, camaraderie, fun, and friendship between colleagues.

- Clear vision: participants identified the need for a clear vision, role and purpose of the team, but also required that teams could be established with appropriate referral criteria into the team.

- Appropriate team processes and resources: This theme includes access to sufficient physical resources (office space, parking, computers); privacy to make confidential phone calls; appropriate and efficient systems and procedures, including induction processes, policies, and paperwork that serves the need of the service whilst avoiding duplication. Workload management, having enough time to do the job, and time management were highlighted by several teams. Finally, the pathway for patients, and the integration of the team with wider services should be seen as an important procedural issue.

- Flexibility (of the team and the individuals within it): The need for flexibility as an individual attribute shows "ability to cover each other's roles, but knowing your boundaries". Individuals also need to be flexible to respond to the constantly changing service environment and patient needs (for instance, flexibility of

working hours). Flexibility of the service was also identified, for instance, flexibility in referral criteria.

- External image of the service: The importance of the external image of the hospital service should be raised by the teams and includes the physical presentation of the staff (that is, whether or not they wear uniforms); the external image portrayed to outside agencies through their external points of contact (for instance phone systems that do not work properly); the external marketing of the service, which is important for managing referrals and the workload of the team is very important.

- Personal attributes: Several personal attributes are very important to having an excellent team. They include approachability, appropriate delegation, being able to compromise, confidentiality, decisiveness, empathy, good organisation skills, initiative; knowing ones strengths and weaknesses; open to learning; acquiring, demonstrating and sharing new skills and knowledge, patience, personal responsibility, protective, reflexive practice and tolerance.

- Individual rewards and opportunity: Participants identify the importance of the individual returns on team work, which includes good financial rewards; opportunities for career development; autonomy; challenge within the role and the opportunity to think outside the box.

VIII. HEALTH CARE LEADERSHIP TOWARDS EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK IN NIGERIAN HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATIONS

For the health care system to attain effective teamwork, health professionals must know how to practice collaboration which the leadership of the healthcare organization should have a major role to play (Beatrice *et al.*, 2010). Some of the practical steps to facilitate effective teamwork which could be initiated by healthcare leadership are;

- Improving communication and partnership among all health providers and patients.

- Ensuring clarity of the roles of all health providers working within the healthcare team environment as documented by the leadership.
- Improved response processes in addressing issues in determination of health of clients.
- Improving communication in the provision of health care services while interacting with patients and caregivers.
- Ensuring high levels of satisfaction among the team members and customers on delivery of health services.
- Effective utilization of health resources provided by the government or generated from the services while leading the organization.

IX. CONCLUSION

An encompassing stakeholder forum in the Nigeria health sector remains essential. The national health system needs a solid administrative policy foundation that allows coordination of priorities and partnership in the health workforce and among various stakeholders.

Good governance is needed to achieve a sound national health system, especially with regard to human resources for health. The Nigerian health system is lacking full capacity in leadership and governance, with this reflecting in the health workforce crises and poor health service delivery in recent years. Although the Nigerian government can be responsive to population health needs but without driving visionary, systemic and structural change in health governance, the prevailing crises in the health workforce and service delivery may continue. According to Dr Jong-wook Lee, former director general of WHO (2016a), there is an urgent need to work together toward ensuring access to a motivated, skilled and supported health worker by every person and everywhere in Nigeria. Building an effective health care system does not depend on technical factors or infrastructural adequacy alone, human factors are extremely important especially with team spirit among entire healthcare workforce. We must advocate for inter professional collaboration among ourselves

because collaboration divides the tasks and multiplies the success. (Adeloye, *et al.,* 2017).

The timeless word of Mattie J.T. Stepanek may be very useful at this juncture. "Unity is strength. When there is teamwork and collaboration wonderful things can be achieved" in Nigerian healthcare systems and in Hospitals in particular.

The various professionals in Hospitals in Nigeria should be adequately brought together to work as a team by human resources managers and administrators in a bid to drop professional interest and carry patients' interest while working as a team and delivering all deliverables in total quality management system manner.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are for effective team building practice in Nigeria healthcare as a solution to Nigerian health care crisis. The researchers hereby present the following for effective team building and practice in Nigerian healthcare:

- Team cohesiveness among health care professionals is hampered by the diversity of the professionals working in the healthcare sector in Nigeria, therefore there is an urgent need to make teams out of the various professionals with an achievable target so as to concentrate on the team outcome than professional interest.
- The efficient use of available material resources by healthcare teams should be encouraged not minding professional diversity and such resources should be adequately provided by the management or government.
- Team cohesiveness amongst healthcare professionals on health teams is largely achieved through professional inter dependence and this should be encouraged in Nigeria.
- Team cohesiveness with trust among Doctors, Pharmacists, Medical Laboratory Scientists and Technicians, Nurses, Physiotherapists, Radiographers and others should be highly encouraged.

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- The Team work spirit should start with Administrative staff and human resources mangers to other health professionals like Doctors, Pathologists, Pharmacists, Medical Laboratory Scientist, Physiotherapists, Radiographers, Medical Laboratory Technician, Medical Laboratory Assistant, Laboratory Clerk and Information Officers
- Patients' outcomes in terms of satisfactory diagnosis, treatment and attention should be the interest of professional collaboration and teamwork in health care delivery in Nigeria.
- Hospitals should employ various categories of professionals with a mandate to work as a team rather than individual professional interest
- Finally, periodic teamwork programmes and training should be organized for staff regularly to instill in team spirit and collaborative work in the Nigerian healthcare system.

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