

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Expanding Access to the Management of HIV/AIDS through Physicians in Private Practice: An Exploratory Survey of Knowledge and Practices in Two Nigerian States

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Abstract

Over the past few years, the cost of antiretroviral drugs has continued to decline. A significant proportion of people in Nigeria seek medical care primarily in the "for profit" private sector. The complexity of managing HIV and AIDS has led to debates on whether care should only be restricted to trained and accredited experts in HIV care. This research studied the knowledge and practices of physicians in private practice in two Nigerian states on the management of patients with HIV/AIDS using an anonymous self-administered questionnaire eliciting knowledge and attitudinal information. This is to ascertain their preparedness to manage HIV positive patients. The doctors were found to be poorly informed on practical issues in the management of HIV patients. These included the need to confirm their patient's HIV status, where to do the confirmation and where to refer such patients for counselling. Most of them referred to the mass media as their primary source of information. There is an urgent need for pro-active planning to prepare physicians in private practice for increasing demands in the management of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. Organising a nation-wide training programme that would lead to ongoing accreditation programme is a way of achieving this. The formulation of guidelines for managing both clinical and non-clinical aspects of HIV/ADS should be prioritised. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2005; 9[2]: 141-150)

Key Words: *Counselling, HIV, AIDS, physicians, private, practice, Nigeria*

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