

## CONTINUING EDUCATION AND SKILL IMPROVEMENT: HOW INVOLVED ARE THE HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

**Background Information:** The appearance of new diseases, changing lifestyles and dietary habits, urbanization and new treatment regimens as well as innovative technology have all made it very necessary for constant training and re-training of healthcare professionals, to keep abreast with the new developments, update and upgrade knowledge through continuing education and skill improvement especially in the Primary Health Centre (PHC) settings being the first point of contact of individuals with health services. There is a paucity of study on knowledge, attitude and practice of Continuous Education (CE) and Skill Improvement (SI) among healthcare workers. This study aimed to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of continuing education and skill improvement among healthcare professionals and to identify the determinants of continuing education and skill improvement among the respondents in PHC facilities in Osun State.

**Methodology:** This study was a descriptive cross sectional study with 373 Healthcare professionals recruited from Primary Health Centres in selected Local Governments in Osun State, using a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using the self-administered questionnaires and analysed using SPSS 17. Results are presented using tables and charts. P value was set at 0.05.

**Results:** The mean age of the respondents was  $37 \pm 0.05$  years. CHEWs were the highest respondents (49.9%) and doctors being the least (1.1%). Most of the respondents acquired their source of continuing education and skill improvement information from colleagues and friends. Respondents had good knowledge on CE and SI (90.6%), a positive attitude (93.0%) which has a positive influence on the practice (73.5%) with more than 60% of respondents having attended courses on CE and SI in the past one year. However, this study revealed that lack of sponsorship and failure to secure a release to attend a CE program and low level of awareness were the major factors hindering participation in CE and SI among primary health care professionals.

**Conclusions and Recommendations:** The good knowledge, positive attitude and good practice of CE and SI among respondents are commendable; but though the practice is not optimal. It is recommended that the practice of CE and SI should be encouraged among the study group. Governments and the management of healthcare organizations should provide funds for sponsorship to motivate healthcare professional to attend continuing education and skill improvement for the improvement of knowledge of primary healthcare professional and the overall benefit of patients.

**KEYWORDS:** Continuing Education, Health Professionals, Skill Improvement