Chapter 4
Indigenous Language Media, Communication, and Sickle Cell Disorder:
Peculiarities of Indigenous Language Media in Tackling Misconceptions of Sickle Cell Disorder

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ABSTRACT

The importance of health communication and information cannot be over emphasized especially with issues related to sickle cell disorder. Sickle cell disorder, common among Africans, has a lot of myths and misconceptions tied to it, so this chapter unearths and explores how indigenous communication can facilitate learning and understanding of the disorder majorly in rural areas and some urban areas where knowledge of the disorder is assessed low using the focus group discussion. It also reveals the importance of incorporating indigenous language and communication techniques in increasing awareness and eradicating stereotypes as regards sickle cell disorder. The findings of this chapter reflect that misinformation occurs due to lack of proper understanding of language used in sickle cell health communication-related issues. Hence, this chapter proposes that health education about the concept of SCD should be executed majorly in indigenous languages and through the indigenous media platforms.

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INTRODUCTION

There is no other known inherited disorder present at such high frequency in a large population and of comparable severity as sickle cell anemia in Africa. With rising standards of living and control of malaria, sickle cell anemia will become an immense medical, social and economic problem throughout the continent (Elguero, et. al, 2015, p. 3).

The World Health Organization projects that as many as 30% of Nigerians are carriers of the sickle cell trait. An estimated 150,000 children are born with the disease in Nigeria each year, in the absence of knowledge and how to manage the disease, many go in search of their own cures (Adegoke, Kuteyi 2012, p. 5). In order to increase the awareness, eradicate myths and misconceptions amongst Nigerians on the disorder, indigenous language media becomes a potent tool in communicating such.

In Nigeria, Sickle Cell Disorder and linked education is now being taught as part of social studies in colleges, consequently generating more awareness nonetheless, this is limited in rural areas (Olakunle, Kenneth, Olalekan, & Adenike, 2014, p. 13). However, this limitation can be curbed if the technique of indigenous language is employed in educating carriers and relations on issues related to the disorder.

This paper therefore examined the importance of incorporating Indigenous language and communication techniques in increasing awareness and eradicating stereotypes as regards sickle cell disorder. It is believed that the authenticity attached to indigenous communication techniques via indigenous language can be used effectively to teach the peculiarities of sickle cell disorder.

The study also seeks to find out how indigenous communication can facilitate learning and understanding of the disorder majorly in rural areas and some urban areas where knowledge of the disorder is assessed low. This study will employ the use of focus group discussions in analyzing the uniqueness of indigenous language media and communication techniques in creating and expanding knowledge as regards sickle cell disorder. Literature will also be reviewed to find out the research findings and positions of scholars and researchers on the subject matter.

The results of the study brought to fore the distinctive peculiarities in employing the indigenous language media and establish a high level of understanding of the disorder as opposed to modern and western communication techniques which had yielded little or minimal desired results. The researchers therefore argue the need to examine the use of indigenous language media and communication technique in tackling the misconceptions and eradicating the myths by educating the populace through the use of indigenous language media whose reliability has been proven by several authors over other media forms.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Sickle cell disease (SCD), also known as sickle cell anemia or sickle cell disorder is one of the most widespread inherited lethal diseases in the world; and was first described in 1910 (Herrick, 1910). It is a common genetic disorder caused by mutations in both copies of the β-globin gene, a major subunit of hemoglobin (Hb) which damages and deforms red blood cells. The clinical picture of the disease usually emerges after four months of age with highly phenotypically variable disease (Bunn, 1997). SCD affects millions of people worldwide. About 300, 000 children globally are born yearly with the disease (Okpala, Thomas, Westerdale, Jegede, Raj, Daley, & Abbs, 2002), whose origin is traceable to the people of Sub Saharan-Africa, Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and Indian descent (Luzzatto, 1981). Amongst these groups, people of Sub-Saharan African are known to have the highest occurrence (Gubis, Ferster, Kentos,