

## Review Article

# Impact of Effective Health Communication Strategies in Nigerian Health Care Delivery System

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**Abstract:** Health care delivery services in Nigeria and other parts of the developing nations of the world remain qualitative owing to consistency in effective communications strategies. With the popular assertion that the world remains a global network service, it is possible to communicate effectively on health issues when there is perfect and steady communication strategy. The paper aimed at providing conceptual frame work of health and communication strategies. The paper also examines the challenge and possible strategies that might bring about quality health care delivery services in Nigeria through effective communication service. The paper concluded that the benefits of effective communication service on accessibility and quality of health service could be increasingly achieved through communication network, collaboration energy and power channel of communication and retraining of health educators. The paper recommended, that relevant stake holders in the health sector should try as much as possible to make frantic efforts at bridging the gap of health development at all levels of government and also, a collaborating energy and proper channel of communication about health education should be well developed in order to keep in touch with new trends, practices and skills in this era of globalization.

**Keywords:** *Collaboration, Discriminating, Endemic, Synergy and Virile.*

## INTRODUCTION

The importance of effective health communication in Nigeria health care system cannot be underestimated. Communication process in health care system is basically a process of disseminating health information to individual in the community. However, communication generally, is to ensure effective accessibility and affordable health services to individuals who are regarded as beneficiaries (Akpabio, 2016). Most great nations in the world are what they are today due to effective communication system. Health communication therefore is recognized as a source of effective channels of bringing health information and other health services close to the community. Amos (2014), observed that through effective health communication system, most people are properly informed on health issues especially when viewed within the perspective of accessibility and efficiency. The phenomenon of health communication has brought with it importance communication technology which is helpful in a wide range of health information. In a similar vein, Ahmed (2009), opinion that good health

for all population has become an acceptable international goal and therefore, they had been a broad garnished life expectancy the over past century due to effective communication system.

Furthermore, the prospect for better and efficient health care delivery system in Nigeria and in other parts of the developing nations of the world is depended on the level of health information system. Kelly (2013), classified communication system into two major aspects: verbal and non-verbal communication. On the aspects of verbal communication, it requires individual to be involved in physical contact or discussion. While non-verbal communication system does not actually involve physical contact or process of passing information on health issues. With effective communication systems, social relations among individuals is enhanced which could involve passing of essential health information to individuals in a community (Daniel, 2016). Effective health communication is viewed as an increasing method of improving health services. Traditionally, the health

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sector has been closed and sometimes not accessible to some community members, with modern technology advancement in information and communication technology (ICT) there is rapid changes in individual health attitudes. Through proper communication strategies, there are positive result in health development dynamics. For instance, there a lot of outstanding innovations in health care delivery system in Nigeria due to recent health care communication system which includes;

- i. Increasing inability of health professionals across borders, most health care sector now involved in recruiting quality health professional.
- ii. The increasing mobility of health consumers traveling far to access medical care has been reduced.
- iii. There are also more private sectors and other relevant stakeholders who provide health services and health insurance schemes for her citizens.
- iv. The use of new communication technologies to spread health information to people such as internet facilities, health machines to detect health problem has drastically helped to improve health problems. In a nutshell, the utilization of health communication service has tremendously changed health care and pharmaceutical delivery in many ways particularly among developing nations in the sub-Sahara region of the world such as Nigeria that progressed at a very slow-pace in health care delivery.

#### **TRENDS IN HEALTH COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Quality health care system in Nigeria required for every human society, this cannot be achieved without effective communication system. If Nigeria health care delivery system is to gain a rightful place in this era of globalization concerted to improve connectivity in communication system must be given recognition (Essien, 2014). There is no doubt that if there is effective health communication system in contemporary society, changes in health attitude and practice will be a reality. Effective communication system enables individuals to have up-to-date information on treatment of disease across borders. Health personnel are now able to have proper information on the treatment of communicable and non-communicable disease that may ravage the society. If an effective health communication system is well planned and manage it will bring about out sourcing even within Nigeria. In this case, not only access to health care system is likely to be improved up on, but also the quality of service (Adeyemi 2012). Furthermore, there are giant strides in health innovation's that is brought about by health communication system. Effective and efficient health communication system pave way for cross fertilization

of ideas among individuals in the society. For instance, through the organization of health conferences and seminars such as the annual national conference of Nigerian Association Health Educators, (NAHE), Health Education Promotion Research Association of Nigeria (HEPRAN) etc. which attract health educators and other health personnel from all works of life to interest on health issue. This initiative could be seen as an opportunity to examine health issues that borders the mind of the Nigerian populace. Ultimately therefore, the organization of health programs could also be seen as one of the health communication processes that could increase individuals access to health care more especially at the global level. Huynen (2014), pointed out that proper channel of health education program will enhance individual knowledge and new technology will also enhance or improve surveillance of infections disease and monitoring of antibiotic resistance. It is very obvious in this direction that health communication process will potentially increase the spread of positive response to the treatment of disease. It is also in very glaring that providing proper response to disease emergence it requires consistency in providing health communication services especially during the occurrence of Ebola disease and Lassa fever which are regarded as the current global communicable disease not only with the more obvious areas such as drug discovery of pandemic and endemic disease and other clinical services, but also with other areas such as better reimbursement process application for internet service, proper utilization of health facilities to practice evidence based care and the availability of skilled health personnel. Darek (2013), pointed that due to the availability of health communication system some state in Nigeria have adopted free medical care services to the vulnerable group for example, women and children have access to free immunization services. Wholesome of 50% free health insurance scheme has tremendously helped to improve health care delivery system in Nigerian society. More importantly, there are improvement in quality care which could also occur as a result of proper communication strategy and acquisition of professional experience. There is an emerging phenomenon from the provision and utilization of proper channel of health communication system and that is the adoption of health education strategy to disseminate health information to individuals in the society. This channel of information is to enable individuals in the society to have a full idea about the challenges of health development that will bring about a move towards ensuring standardization of health education and quality of life (Ahmed 2009).

Due to the outstanding effort made at improving healthy living through effective health communication, the world health organization (WHO) undertook decisive measures at formulating and implementing strict health policies and actions in controlling infectious disease of a global level. In a similar development, the world health organization

(WHO) in conjunction with other non-governmental organization (NGOs) played a critical role in repositioning the health sector through effective health communication strategies, there is a means of sending global alerts on the dangers of communicable disease on the society.

### **Challenges of Health Communication Strategies in Achieving Quality Health Care Delivery System**

Despite the benefit of effective health communication on the contemporary world today, there still exist some prevailing challenges that undermine the successful delivery of virile health care services in Nigeria and the world in general. Kelly (2013), identified the following as challenges militating against the successful health care delivery system in Nigeria and other developed part of the world.

1. The negative impact of health communication on the health status of individual could be undesirable especially among those people who are economically deprived of basic social needs and services such as education and health care. However, the negative effect of health communication tends to be far more negative than positive since poverty is closely related to health conditions.
2. Continuous spread of infectious disease is probably one of the most mentioned health effects of health communication and past disease outbreaks. For instance, the globalization of food production and consumption has been associated with the increased spread and transmission of food born diseases.
3. Coordination of health communication has been very poor. This development has also led to inconsistency in providing good health services to individuals in the society.
4. Climate change and environmental disposition is potentially the most serious threat and challenges that humanity has ever faced in history.
5. Shortage and unevenly distribution of fund to effectively embark on proper dissemination of health information has been a serious set back facing the health sector.
6. Lack of professionals in the health sector that are capable of providing wide range of health information of the people of the local communities. All these are challenges that prevent successful accomplishment of health care delivery system in Nigeria and in other parts of developing nations in sub-saharan African.

### **Strategies for Achieving Quality Health Care Delivery through Effective Health Communication**

Despite the afore-mentioned challenges initiating the successful achievement of quality health care through effective health communication system, the following according strategies Jackson (2012) if well managed, would go a long way in strengthening

quality access to health care system in this era of globalization

1. Health care providers should be spiced with accurate data and health information to keep them in tune with the trends of health communication strategies.
2. Organization of public campaign and enlightenment processes in conjunction with community based health personnel's, should be given up-to-date health information.
3. Health communication infrastructural facilities should always be provided to health workers to encourage proper dissemination of health information.
4. Training and refraining of health communication officers should be embarked upon to improve on the modern health communication system.
5. Health communication professionals should undertake the right type of health related communication services.
6. There is the need to adopt collaboration synergy between health sector and other relevant health agencies.
7. Donor agencies and in territory development partners (IDPS) should continue to usher in their best to ensure that sustainable health communication services are achieved.
8. All hands should be on deck to ensure consistency in adopting proper health communication strategy.

### **HEALTH COMMUNICATION AND THE PROMOTION OF HEALTH EDUCATION ACTIVITIES**

One of the basic roles of health education in adopting health communication strategies is to adequately translate scientific language into an understandable information on health and other related issues in the society. According to Daniel (2016), the health information is usually disseminated through proper channel of communication which usually address diverse audience in various settings. The health educator is basically to formulate and support rules, policies and legislation on health issues in a community. It is however the responsibility of health educators to design health programs that will be sent to the community for the purpose of creating awareness on any developmental changes. David (2014), opined that to effectively carryout any health programs, health education instruction strategies should be adopted at every stage of developmental process. By and large, health communication process cannot be separated from any health education programs. In other words, health communication process seen to be relevant in general public and at various workplace, religious settings, markets, communities through their leaders. All these are the target audience where health communication activities are displayed. It is also very pertinent to emphasis that implementation of health education programs cannot be successfully carried out alone

without utilization of proper channel of effective communication processes. Adeyemi (2012), asserted that effective communication processes will enable health educators to develop wide range of educational methods and techniques that will change the behaviour, habit, and practices of individuals within the society. Health informers adopt various means and strategies to pass any relevant health information through an organized means of communication.

For instance, in the new global dispensation, health information could be sent across to people through lectures, seminars, workshops, leaflets, posters and other instructional resources that could be developed in a simple and concise way that the people will understand. All these approaches will be possible if there is an understanding between the governmental of the day and health workers.

### CONCLUSION

Health care delivery system in Nigeria and in other developing nations of the world will trigger well if proper health communication system is adopted. However, in ensuring successful implementation of health policy in African society, it requires planning and making sure that right type of health personnels are put in place for the purpose of ensuring the utilization of health communication strategy. For our health centers and other health institutions to be viable, it implies that modern forms of communication system and facilities are replaced. This development will go along way in making sure that our health care services are functional, relevant, accessible and affordable for all and sundry.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of health communication in promoting good health among Nigerian citizens and in other parts of sub-saharan African cannot be underestimated. Therefore, if proper health communication process is to help in promotion activities, the following suggestions are made:

1. Proper utilization of resource materials should be intensified.
2. All efforts should be made at creating an enabling environment for the dissemination of health information across to the recipients.

3. Efforts should also be intensified in organizing community based enlightenment programs on accepting modern health communication processes.
4. Health educators who are professionally trained should be encouraged to always adopt various health communication strategies in disseminating health information at all levels of government.

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