

Effect of COVID 19 on Doctor-Patient Relationship in a Tertiary Health Facility in Enugu State South-East Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Background: The doctor-patient relationship has been linked to patient satisfaction, treatment adherence and outcome. It remains the cornerstone of medical practice though may be affected in this era of COVID 19 pandemic. The objective of this study was to determine the effect of COVID 19 pandemic on the doctor-patient relationship in a tertiary health facility in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Methods: The study was a cross-sectional study conducted in a tertiary health facility in Enugu State South-East Nigeria. It involved all the doctors working in the hospital as at the time of data collection. A structured online (Google form) questionnaire was used to collect the data. It was shared through the different doctor's online platforms (WhatsApp). Data from patients attending the General Out-Patient clinic of the hospital were collected using a similarly structured self-administered questionnaire that was shared to consenting patients by research assistants after consultation with their doctors. About 186 doctors and 155 patients participated in the study. Data was analyzed with SPSS version 25. The categorical variables were shown as frequencies and percentages

Results: There was disparity in some of the studied aspect of the doctor-patient relationship as reported by the doctors and the patients. The prominent being the social distancing practice which almost all the patients (91.6%) said that it has affected their relationship with their doctors while only about half of the doctors (52.7%) agreed to this assertion. However, both parties agreed that the level of physical examination have reduced to the barest minimum (doctors; 11.8%, patients; 11.6%).

Conclusion: The present COVID 19 pandemic have affected the doctor-patient relationship adversely which may on the long run influence treatment outcomes especially as the pandemic is still ongoing.

Keywords: Doctor-patient relationship, COVID 19, Tertiary health facility, Enugu State, Nigeria

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