HOW PREPARED ARE WE FOR THE NEXT PANDEMIC?
TAKING A CUE FROM THE CHALLENGES IN THE
MANAGEMENT OF SICKLE CELL DISEASE DURING THE
LAST COVID 19 PANDEMIC IN NIGERIA

Hannah E. Omunakwe1, Benedict Nwogoh2, Oluomachi Charity Nnachi3, Musa Abubakar U4, Okoye HC5, Uche Chika L6, Saleh Yuguda7, Ofonime Essien8, Ekaette David9, Olanrewaju Olusola J10, Sani Awwalu11, Dachi Rufai A12, Opadeyi Oluwaseyi M13, and Kaladada Korubo1

1Rivers State University Teaching Hospital
2University of Benin Teaching Hospital
3Alex Ekwueme Federal University Teaching Hospital Abakaliki
4Usmanu Danfodiyo University Faculty of Agriculture
5University of Nigeria - Emugu Campus
6Abia State University Faculty of Medicine
7Gombe State University College of Medical Sciences
8University of Calabar Teaching Hospital
9National Hospital Abuja
10Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital Complex
11Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital
12Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University
13Lagos University Teaching Hospital

August 29, 2023

Abstract

Background: The Covid-19 pandemic affected healthcare delivery globally. The impact was more for individuals with chronic diseases requiring regular visits to the hospital. This study aimed to assess the impact of the pandemic on care for patients with Sickle cell disease (SCD) in Nigeria. Methods: This was a cross-sectional survey involving 435 SCD patients from the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. Data was collected through pre-tested and validated, semi-structured questionnaires using Google forms online and face-to-face interviews at the Clinic. Results: Teaching hospitals were the most utilised health facility by the respondents 269 (61.8%). Bone pain was the most frequent crisis 318 (70.7%) with a significant increase in frequency during the pandemic when compared with the preceding year, \( p=0.004 \). Many of the respondents 227(52.2%) required hospitalization during the pandemic. Major concerns expressed for accessing care include fear of exposure to COVID-19-infected patients or health workers who have been exposed to Covid and conversion of regular health facilities to Covid-19 treatment centres. During the Pandemic, 102 (23.4%) respondents had easy access to their doctors and telemedicine was available to 87(20%) but 56 (12.9%) and 97 (22.3%, ) had difficulties in getting blood transfusion and accessing laboratory tests respectively. Up to 139(32.9%) did not have difficulties getting pain relief, 169 (38.9%) had their routine medications while 166 (38.2%) had their income significantly affected during the pandemic. Conclusion: The findings revealed challenges in accessing routine medical care, concerns about exposure to COVID-19, and disruptions in healthcare services. This article discusses the implications of
the survey results and proposes strategies to strengthen sickle cell care in preparation for future pandemics.

Hosted file