ASSESSMENT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF, AND ATTITUDES TO PALLIATIVE CARE AMONG DOCTORS IN A TERTIARY HEALTH CENTRE IN NORTH-WESTERN NIGERIA TOWARDS PALLIATIVE CARE

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Background
Palliative care is an area of health care that focuses on relieving and preventing the suffering of patients. It utilizes a multi-disciplinary team approach to ensure a “holistic” care of the patient. It is a relatively new concept in medicine and the knowledge and attitudes of physicians in Nigeria towards it have not been widely studied.

Method
This is a quasi-experimental study with a single or one group pre-test and post-test design. It is an interventional study involving medical doctors of all cadres practicing at the Usman Dan-fodio University Teaching Hospital (UDUTH), Sokoto, North-western Nigeria. The educational intervention was in the form of invitational lecture presented after the pre-test. Data was collected by a self-administered structured questionnaire. All analyzes were conducted using SPSS version 17.0 (Chicago II, USA) for windows. Data was presented using relevant descriptive statistics such as percentages, means and standard deviations. The chi-square test was used to test for associations. All figures are rounded to the nearest whole number

Results
The respondents varied in age from 25-50 years and the modal age was 30-34 years. Only about 9.2% of the respondents were very knowledgeable about palliative care. However, knowledge and attitudes levels appreciated significantly to 28% (X²=24.9, p-value<.001) after an invitational health education lecture. Both knowledge and attitudes were significantly affected by the sex, number of years of practice and medical specialty of the respondents. The doctors in O&G and Surgery departments were more knowledgeable and more willing to participate in palliative care. There was no significant association between knowledge and marital and professional statuses of the respondents.

Conclusion
Even though the knowledge base of and attitudes to palliative care of the doctors was poor, interventions like health education significantly improved their knowledge and attitudes towards palliative care.