

Attitudes towards People with Disability and Career Interest in Disability Studies: A Study of Clinical Medical Students of a Tertiary Institution in Southeastern Nigeria

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Abstract : One in seven people worldwide suffer from a disability. 80% of people with disabilities live in developing countries. Negative attitudes and misconceptions among health-care providers constitute barriers to optimal health care for people with disabilities. This underscores the relevance of a study of the attitude of Nigerian medical students towards disability and their willingness to work in the disability sector. This was a descriptive cross-sectional study conducted among 254 penultimate and final year medical students of a university in southeastern Nigeria. The mean age of the students was 24.8 ± 3.12 years. Majority of the students were male (75.2%), single (96.9%), of the Igbo tribe (86.6%), Christian (97.6%) and grew up in urban areas (68.1%). Results indicated that the medical students had a predominantly positive attitude towards people with disability as 73.8% had a positive attitude and mean attitude score was 67.03 ± 0.14 (positive attitude = 61 - 120, negative attitude = 0 - 60). Chi-square analysis did not show any significant effect of demographic and social factors on the students' attitude towards People with Disabilities. The students were mostly willing to work in areas that address the challenges of people with disability (70.4%) but a greater proportion had never heard about Disability Studies (67.5%). About a third of the students (33.2%) would like to travel abroad to practice in the disability sector. Conclusions: The students generally had a positive attitude towards people with disability and a greater percentage were willing to work in the disability sector in their future career. About two-thirds had however, never heard about disability studies. There was some potential for brain drain among the students as a third of the population intended to practice abroad on graduation.

Keywords : attitudes, career interest, disability, medical students

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