

ONCOLOGY, PRIMARY HEALTHCARE AND THE HIGH MORTALITY RATE AMONG PEOPLE WITH CANCER IN NIGERIA AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: A SURVIVOR'S CRY FOR GLOBAL INTERVENTION

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Problem Statement: In Nigeria and most part of Africa, oncology services are not integrated into the general public healthcare system, especially at the Primary Healthcare level. This has helped to cut off most part of the populations from access to the few oncology facilities that are capable of cancer diagnosis and treatment. Coupled with other factors such as very low awareness about cancer among the people, deaths from diverse cancers in Nigeria and in Sub-Saharan are increasing at alarming rate.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to bring the attention of the world to the high death rates from cancer going on in Nigeria and the Sub-Saharan Africa. It is a survivor's cry for global intervention to save the millions of helpless cancer victims in Nigeria and Africa.

Methodology: Critical and in depth review of the studies was done with the aim of identifying the status of oncological services in Nigeria and its integration into the general public health system, especially at the primary healthcare level.

Finding: A Study of a 2015 report on Radiation and oncology services available in Nigeria revealed that there were five Linear Machines and three Cobalt-60 Machines with only four of them functional. The population of Nigerians served by a megavoltage cancer therapy machine is over 33 million. In a population of about 180 million, there were just 30 radiation oncologists, 8 medical physicists, 18 Radiotherapy Technologists and 28 oncology nurses. These facilities and personnel were found in few private hospitals and in some public tertiary health centers. While the situation has not improved at all, thousands of patients still queue for six months or above to go through a course of radiotherapy service. Majority die in the process.

Conclusion: Nigeria and indeed Africa is under the bondage of cancer. The trend present opportunities for both African governments and international agencies to rise now to tackle the high mortality rate from cancer in the continent.

Biography

Lanre Jacob is a Playwright, Novelist. He has completed his Graduation from the University of Lagos in 1999 with a BA degree in Linguistics. He has developed Dermato-fibro-sarcoma protuberance in his scalp at the age of ten, leading to several dangerous surgeries. His 30 years of cancer experience led him into oncology research and vigorous cancer advocacy and in 2016, he has established the Lanre Jacob Sarcoma Cancer Foundation, a non-profit working to support people with cancer and which also collaborates with governments in Nigeria to carry out sustained national cancer awareness among community groups across country.

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