

## **The information needs of patients in Ahmadu Bello university teching hospital, Zaria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study which is to investigate the information needs of out and in-patients of the Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital, Zaria use a survey research method. The study underscores the great importance of information to this group of people especially as adequate provision of these needs has a positive implication if not just a speedy recovery but also on the prevention of certain avoidable ailments. The review of related literature confirmed these. To achieve the primary goal of the study, the questionnaire, interviews and personal observation have been used complementarily to collect relevant data. The data was carried out using the frequency table and percentages along side the discussions. In the end, it was found that both in-and out-patients of the hospital, need a diverse information including how and where to get doctors and drugs. Besides, the hospital's information unit was responsible for catering to this need with room for improvement. Meanwhile, the hospital's library was not active in this respect. To this end, it was recommended that the authority of the hospital takes a conscious step towards harmonizing the obligations of the information unit with those of the library with a view to meeting the information needs of its patients more adequately*

**Key Words:** Information, Information Needs, Patients, Inpatients, Outpatients, Disparity

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Information has been variously defined. It cannot be said to be limited to news or facts or what is being taught in the classroom or found in reference books. Adimorah (1987) [1] wrote that "information is a major asset of any country that knows how to harness and organise this resource". This goes to say that information is a major wealth for any country, be it developed or developing country. Whether one is sick or healthy, one has need for information to perform his day-to-day activities. Man is always information seeker to safeguard him in his daily life. This is because an awkward access through socio-economic strata of each society is assumed to depend upon relevant information needs. The importance of information to the patients in Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital, Zaria cannot be overemphasised. The availability of the relevant information to the patients can boost their rapid recovery.

Thus, inspite of the all-embracing nature of information in the society, one can not speak convincingly of a universal meaning of information. Scraam *et al* (1971) [2] once contended on the nature of information when they offered to define information as "any content that reduces uncertainty or the number of alternative possibilities in a situation". They further opined that information include such other thoughts as "emotions, facts, opinions, guidance or persuasion". It does not necessarily have to be expressed in words or stated categorically just as it does not have to be precisely identical in both sender and receivers.

Casting a look at information from the perspective of a general communication theory, Strapper (1973) [3] views it as “that which is transmitted to the receiver and becomes part of his knowledge”. This definition suggests that messages yield information. More relevant definitions of the subject of discourse were those given by Faauconnier and the Great Soviet Encyclopedia (1976). [4] According to the former, information is “any content that helps one structure or organise those aspects of the environment which are relevant to a situation in which he must act”. In other words, where it’s possible to organize and sometimes re-organize our environment using available information around us, disorderliness and arbitrary manifestations borne out of random and irrational behaviours would reign supreme in our lives. This means that, for inability to interpret information we would not have been able to structure, organise or form an image of or know and understand our surrounding in order that certain alternatives appears more likely than others in the pursuance of our goals.

In the similar vein, the latter definition was given as “a message transmitted from certain persons to other persons by verbal, written or any other means”. This implies that “means” would entail both the use of technological means as well as conventional signal. Similarly, it can be said to include the processes of transmitting and receiving of the messages themselves.

Generally speaking, information has always played an important role in human life from time immemorial. It is indeed the product of man’s intellectual activities whose generating and calculating processes dated back to the time when earliest men acquired the capacity to think and express his thoughts and ideas. In his persistent quest for knowledge about nature in every manifestation, man was able to achieve a spectacular progress in virtually every field of human endeavour.

Thus, as society evolves from an industrial to a post-industrial stage, the one unique resource input into the social industrial process had always been human knowledge – the organized information that programmes and governs machine performance. Equally, significant in this same aspect is the fact that the essence and the need to which information could be put have a permeating effect on every human society. In other words, regardless of the nature, type and of human society, the needs for some kinds of information or the other are not negotiable. Hence, the growing number of resources on the information needs of specialized groups as a means of acknowledging the underlying essence which information and its appropriate and timely provision has for the successful execution of their activities.

There is no doubting the fact that there are differing information needs of various classes of users and these users may be grouped, for instance, by subject or discipline, type of activity, employer, and other such factors. Regardless of one’s social, cultural, educational and economic status, the need for information of some kinds or the other remains central issue in human existence. For people of social and economic strata, the problem of regular and adequate access to their information needs is not as acute as it is for those of lower status. Comparatively too, the information needs and information provision opportunities available meeting the needs of the disadvantaged particularly the hospitalized can best be described as inadequate. Yet, this group of people has a right to getting on their needs and interest just as any other group.

The hospitalized, whether in or out-patients are a combination of both the rich and the poor and more importantly, the literates and the illiterates. The group comprises the entire rank and file of a particular locality since sickness which remains the binding force among the members of this group, and sickness is not respecter of any one.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In spite of this ever going realization of the need for information by a diverse human groups still suffer neglect. Whether or not this intentional is a different issue altogether. The need for information by any given group of people has been said to be generally affected by a number of factors. These according to Paisely (1978) [5] includes “the range of information sources available, the uses to which the information will be put; the background; motivation; professional, orientation and other individual characteristics of the user, the social, political and economic systems surrounding the user and the consequences of information use”. Similarly, Vickery (2000) [6] discussing users’ needs and habits one to keep abreast of the latest development in a field of interest or way of widening one’s general knowledge. It is against this background as the above that the patients in Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital, Zaria can be said to be suffering from neglect.

At any rate, the need for information is of high imperativeness in this respect. For fast and better recovery, the hospitalized may need some kind of information or the other as an aid to treatment. To assume that this group of people has no peculiar information needs of their own may not be entirely correct. Patients perhaps may need other psychological information than medical treatment to attain full and quick recovery. Meeting such psychological needs can not be entirely divorced from a regular and appropriate provision of their information needs. Hence, the essence of the need to investigate the information needs of patients at the Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital, Zaria, thus the information deprivation of sick people in this hospital constitute the basic element of investigation in this research.

In all spheres of human activities, information is necessary. For this an industrialist needs information for successful running of his organization. That is he needs information on where to get raw materials to run industry, information on current sales of his products in the market and so on. A manager or decision-maker needs information on statistical data for effective planning or decision-making. Bruce *et al* (1973) [7] wrote that "the term information can be obtained as data-making; information must have the potential to reduce, revolve, or increase the uncertainty of a person vis-à-vis specific situation", information is not necessary for decision making alone but it can also reduce uncertainties which might have been developed by the people towards managers and decision-makers. Information could be in different forms. This could be based on criteria such as source, mode of transmission, or utilization, each of which implies a different level of analysis, however, regardless of the criteria, any type of information must have the potential to change uncertainty or certainty state of an individual.

One must not confuse an information source with its meaning. Ogden, C.K and Richard (1979) [8] pointed out that "the meaning of symbol or word involves the relationship of the symbol to the transmitters the receiver and the symbol itself. Only messages are transmittable and meaning is not in the message but in the message user". Thus, it could be argued on this view that for information to be meaningful or for the information user to make meaning out of the information, it must be relevant to the need of the users. For the purpose of this study, a selected number of information sources will be referred to as "factual". The term factual does not imply accuracy or value, nor does it ignore the consideration that factual information inevitably will filter through the receiver's. Cognition processes because of the difficulties involved in defining information in general and factual information in particular, examples of factual information sources are professional meeting, committee meetings, journals, books, inter-personal contacts, telephone calls, facsimile, and memoirs and so on.

Charles (1998) [9] found that "certain people tend to come into contact with more and better sources of information in the performance of their job. They read more articles and reports, publish more monographs, articles and reports, they have more inter-personal contacts with other professionals". This suggests that information gathering could be achieved with reliable source. Thus, provision of adequate and accurate information to people must depend on the type of source and its accessibility to the people.

In terms of specific information acquisition characteristics, the studies conducted indicated that information resources could be through reading books, journals, articles and reports, publishing more articles, books and reports, coming into contact with a large number of other professionals, and attending more conferences and meetings. In this case, libraries have an important role to play. Because, these information sources need to be stored in a particular centre for public consumption. Libraries are the only convenient centre which is accessible to all and sundry. So if we want information from these sources to be exposed to the public, user priority should be accorded to libraries as centre for information dissemination.

Information takes a variety of meanings depending upon the context in which it is used. Our approach relates to its effectiveness, use and value. In information theory, the content of the message is insignificant, but more concerned with the probability of the receipt of any particular message for various conditions of transmission system. As has been said earlier, human being is information dependent organism in almost all level of their lives.

However, in spite of all-embracing aspect of information in society, one can not speak of a universal meaning of information. Many reasons could be attributed to this. But for the purpose of this study, we shall look at definition that could give practical application to the concept.

UNESCO (1976) [10] views information as "a community, a resource of value capable of being exploited in the same manner as copper, cotton, machinery, mineral resources, etc, that can be utilized to produce more goods for

consumption of society”. It is in this context that “the objectives of NATIS is designed that all engaged in political, economic, scientific, social and cultural activities receives necessary contribution to the whole community”.

The two quotations as reflected in the UNESCO’s publications sum up that information is and what it is for. It is a manifestation of the philosophy of a free flow and equitable distribution of information within social unit, village, town or at country level. It also has to be appreciated that the purpose of information and communication are conditioned by the needs of each event and activity and context of time and place. For instance, information for the dire need to acquire and pursue knowledge vigorously and its problems are necessarily the same as information for the political, cultural, or even educational needs. It merely cited an aspect or facet of specific, individual and personal needs in relation to the broader and general societal needs.

### **Information: Nature and Uses**

Information as earlier been defined by Webster’s third new International Dictionary, “is informing or to be informed” or “the process by which the form of an object of knowledge is impressed upon the apprehending mind so as to bring about the state of knowledge”.

Like gravity or electricity, information can not be described and explained or understood but its properties and effects can be observed, enabling us to improve our communication system. Information is an indispensable aspect of modern society. We regard information as that which modifies a knowledge structure in any way. Some of the modifying information comes to us by direct observation of our surroundings, some from what others told us. All information which modifies a knowledge structure is the result of an information process. Sometimes, it is imposed on us, but any information we gain is the result of a process in which our neural system is activated by some source outside our brains.

Information is more than books. It may appear in many forms others than the traditional books. Information in wider sense may include artifacts and decorations, which are records of anthropologists and historians. The modern graphic records include pamphlets, periodicals, newspapers, magazines, monographs, photographs, films, microfilms, maps, charts etc.

We may therefore, consider information as any recorded knowledge that may be useful to man’s endeavour in his daily life. This recorded knowledge may be found in a variety of sources such as correspondences, monographs, trade literature and so on. Every facet of our lives incidental or major is related to information. From the moment we wake in the morning until we sleep in the evening, we face hundreds of incidents requiring information for guidance, indeed, often for survival.

It might be argued that, we are information dependent organisms on many levels. As matured organism, our bodies are complex system of information feedback and analytical processes. We cannot function in our external environment without information. Individual, organisations, and indeed whole society survive on information. Civilization is possible only because of our ability to transfer information from one person to another. The more complex our society, the more necessary it is to facilitate and support the information transfer.

Information is the key to socialization. For many centuries now most enlightened people have believed that “the pen is mightier than sword”, but in the present time, we have come to realize that the preservation and transmission of what the pen has written is a key to both power and progress. Increasingly, it is being viewed as new basic resources, politicians, businessmen, Heads of Department and even the persons on the street talk about the need of time and resources in information gathering. Many of these people have little understanding of what information is or its process of transfer, but they recognize its importance. Information is the essential ingredient in decision-making. As the situation in which decision must be made become more complex, the need for information correspondingly increases. And it has been the characteristics of modern life that it is complex. Business, sciences and technology, government and so on are concerned with a world encompassing more and more interrelationships, and the need in each case has therefore become ever greater to provide the decision-makers with more information.

As said earlier, man is naturally an information dependent organism. The primitive societies needed information in order to live effectively in their environment, such information communication led to their developing speech and writing. Suleman (1986) [11] argued that “when human society was primitive, tribes huddling in caves against the cold and other ever present dangers even, that society had the urge, feeling or desire of certain essential

information need". Suffice to add that information is a process which is every day's affair. Thus, information is vital to policy makers, because it can help them to get appropriate data for decision-making. Information is also important in running large organization, integrated rural development to adapt interactive approach to other innovations, modifying traditional characteristics. Adimorah (1987) [1] recognizes the vital use of information and establishes that "information is a major asset of any country that knows how to harness and organise this resources". Information thus plays great functions in different spheres of man's life.

In addition, the use of information could include the following: civic function, this is towards satisfy domestic problems, such as information on health, child care, education, where to buy important for housewives, illiterate citizens, and rural farmers, information keep them up-date on their daily activities. It also reduces uncertainties and resolving ambiguities and providing the basis for sound planning and accurate action. It enriches the life of people and community, the proper and relevant information fosters progress and development of community be it urban or rural, and makes people more healthier and capable in their daily occupations, makes them better members of home, community and keep pace with progress in all fields. Generally, information is used to introduce and spread new ideas in a constant flow and exchange information of any development. No meaningful development that can take place in society without adequate and free flow of information.

In the final analysis therefore, Adamu *et al* (1989) [12] summarized the uses of information when they stated that "progress in the field of human endeavour, growth and development are largely regulated and determined by our ability to reflect, appreciate, and comprehend on the necessary variable involved in the information circle". Thus, the uses of information are important in all aspect of human activities.

### **The Need for Information by Hospital Patients**

Information needs could be regarded as knowledge required by a group of people or individual living in a particular geographical area. The knowledge could be in their area of occupation and health, that is, the techniques that might have been developed in such area. For instance, in hospitals where people are predominantly ill, they need knowledge on education, growth, peace, adventure, habilitation and rehabilitation. At this juncture, it is important to know who is a "patient". Urch (1982) [13] opined out that:

Patients are you and i. a wide cross section of the population a general hospital ward. The Vice-chancellor of the University, a clergyman, two solicitors a general practitioner, a former, banker, three engineers, a rodent operative, a painter, a hospital cook, a retired bank manager, a polish seaman, a spanish seaman, a prisoner.(under escort), a hospital administrator, two local government works and so on. This is in just two wards, there are in addition children's orthopaedic, geriatric, gynecological, nose, ear and throat ward and so on- patients are all and of walks in life.

If hospital patients are a section of the public at all, they are a cross section of the whole public, readers and on-readers alike, and are certainly not exclusively a cross section of that 25 – 30 percent of the public who are public library users. Teaching hospital patients are still less a cross section of the whole public in that sickness does not strike indiscriminately and evenly over the full range of age and sex but tends to strike most heavily on the young and on the ageing and in the maternity field, for example affects exclusively a narrow age range of the female sex. However, in this world of peace and noise, mental illness coronaries and accidents affects many age groups from the adolescent to the old. Patients in hospital are treated with the utmost kindness by hospital staff but they are nevertheless isolated from their normal emotional background and contacts and to greater or lesser extent, must call on their reserves of physical and spiritual strength to combat their ailments and to this extent again are still further removed from normality.

Just to make the problem even more difficult is the fact that different hospitals have different specialization and we are left with the position that each hospital information scientist must approach his or her problem in the light of the circumstances actually prevailing at that time and place and with humility, understanding and humanity. Information provision to hospital patients can be considered in the main as that of humanitarian significance. The needs of the patients with regards to moral, recreation and rehabilitation are of paramount importance such that everyone's interest in the hospital commonly is considered.

From an overall development point of view, patients have a bill of rights approved by the House of Delegates of the American Hospital Association. They stated that:



The patient has right to obtain from his physician complete current information concerning his diagnosis, treatment, prognosis, in terms the patient can be reasonably expected to understand. When it is not medically advisable to give information to the patient, the information should be made available to an appropriate person in his behalf. He has the right to know by name, the physician responsible for coordinating his care. The patient has the right to get information necessary to give informed consent prior to the start of any procedure or treatment. The patient also has the right to every consideration of his privacy concerning his own medical care programme. Case discussion, consultation, examination and treatment and expect that all communications and records pertaining to his care should be treated confidential. He also has the right to obtain information as to any relationship of his hospital to other health care and educational institutions in so far his care is concerned.

Certainly, the patients need information that would tend to increase their education, growth, peace, adventure, inhabilitation and rehabilitation. They would also like to know sources of information on innumerable subjects, technical and otherwise.

Factors which will influence the characteristics and needs of the patients, in addition to the community's socio-economic level and their age and sex include type of institution and its specialists; the length of the term of care (short or long term) and the proportion of ambulatory patients, likewise, the range of differences among individual patients in their social and cultural background and education will affect the extent and kind of potential use of information much as it does in any community.

However, the need for information has been said to be affected by a number of factors summarized by Paisely (1978) [5] as "the range of information sources available, the uses to which the information will be put; the background, motivation, professional orientation and other individual characteristics of the user; the social; political and economic systems surrounding the user, the consequence of information use". On generating information needs, King and Palmour (1981) [14] suggest that a sequence of events and relationship forming a conceptual model of information seeking behaviour be considered.

Discussing user's needs and habit, Vickery (2000) [6] noted that generally information needs have several sources. There is firstly, the need for awareness about the going-on in one's field of work, and a need to keep up-to-date with current progress either to keep abreast of latest development in a field of interest or as a way of widening one's general knowledge. Thus, for other specialized groups in any environment, the hospitalized represents a special group in that there is a common bond between all members of the group; which is ailment, whether as an in or an out-patient. They are a group of people who, due to ill health, are undergoing medical treatment in a hospital. When they are resident within the hospital premises for the exclusive purpose of extensive treatment and care, they are referred to as in-patients. But when they come on appointments for same purposes as above, they become out-patients. Ill-health as the common ground for all the hospitalized knows no physical, social, economic and even educational boundaries. In other words it cuts across all sections of the society at any given point in time. As such, a divergent range of information needs can be expected among the hospitalized as in any other normal full recovery instance. However, the means of satisfying such needs may not necessarily be the same.

Hence, the need for an investigation of their information needs with a view to ensuring an approved information provision to the hospitalized at Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital, Zaria.

#### **Information Channels for Meeting the Needs**

Effective dissemination of information is very important for the survival and growth of a nation. This is because it can affect changes in knowledge, values, motivation and voluntary behaviours of many people.

No method or channel disseminating information in hospitals is most appropriate. Rather, this varies considerably with the goal of the information source and the message content as it affects a given set of receivers. By and large, the most prominent channel is inter-personal as well as the library. The inter-personal mode of information communication in our society has a long history dating back to the pre-literate times, when the oral medium of communication was mostly used. Much of the evidences relating to the past are enshrined in oral traditions. With a particular reference to Nigeria, Olaniyan (1985) [15] noted that "the court historians, freelance oral artists, professional guild artists as well as leaders and devotees of traditional religion" are some of the carriers of oral tradition. Not only did these verbal artists enabled the present generation have access to their ancestral past, they also explain why the place of oral tradition is held in high esteem in a society like ours.

According to Hartley (1973) [16] there are a number of essential features of inter-personal mode of communication. For one, it involves a face-to-face meeting between two participants' in varying roles and relationships to one another. Because it is a two-way communication process, it concerns as much the exchange of messages as the creation and exchange of meaning. Thus, it is a continuous process and it is cumulative over time.

A vivid insight into the oral antecedents of African societies as provided by Amadi (1981) [17] noted that our "habitual manner of social, personal and political intercourse has been oral". He described it as a manner of communication by telling and being told, involving the free flow of symbolic associations, wise cracks and proverbs, riddles and tongue-twisters as well as ritual incantations, poems and festive songs". Hence, its impact derives as much from its significance as it does from the "emotional appeal, tonal texture the communicator's physical gesticulations, facial expressiveness, and the total effect created by its message". With its own grammar, style and aesthetic canons, his communication system has the multiple advantages of enabling "audience participation and impromptu interjections, constant feedback and communal queries, criticisms and the possibility of classification".

However, the strength and weakness of the oral tradition can be found in "its exclusive reliance upon memory and recall". To use Schram's (1993) [18] words "in the oral traditional society, the provision of or wide horizon communication are inefficient: the traveller and ballad singer come too seldom and know too little". As for Davidson (1984) [19] one major short fall of this channel of information is its nature of being "culturally defined, therefore changing only as "cultures change".

Those theories that informed the establishment and operation of the library in any society cannot be unconnected with the community wide oriented nature of its philosophy. As such, its character arose as a result of its permeating effects on the entire community. Like any other public institutions, hospital libraries are both causes and consequences of the society in which they are to be found, for it is to these societies they must respond and be responsible. In this context Onadiran (1981) [20] definition of the hospital library is relevant. He sees it as "the traditional and basic hospital information centre whose purpose for existence is to fulfil patients needs by accumulating information and storing knowledge and by disseminating and knowledge. Thus, it can be said that the communication of information and ideas constitutes a major task of the hospital library. This is because, they represent a vital component in the structural outlay of the hospitals in terms of facilitating the full and satisfactory realization of the objectives for which these hospitals were primarily established. Hence, the need and essence of an hospital library and information centres in the specific area of provision of a vital wide range of information needed by patients, doctors, nurses and other auxiliary workers in an hospital.

### **Descriptive of the Area of Study**

Information needs of patients in Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital; particularly the Otorhinolaryngology Department was the area of study. The study comprises of the entire in and out-patients of Otorhinolaryngology Department of the Teaching Hospital, Zaria irrespective of their age, sex, tribe and educational differences. As at the time of the conduct of this research, a total number of one thousand, two hundred and forty (1,240) out-patients and two hundred and thirty in-patients were on the Otorhinolaryngology records with a grand total of one thousand, four hundred and seventy (1,470) constitute the entire population of the study.

### **Objective of the Study and Methodology**

The objective of this study include among others to find out the kind of information needs by in and out-patients of Otorhinolaryngology Department Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital, Zaria to identify what these needs are, to examine how these needs are being met, to identify which information channels can serve their identified needs, to ascertain the adequacy of these means of satisfying these needs and to proffer ways of improving the present situation.

The study adopts the survey method of research because of the population which numbers hundreds and thousands. It is a method considered appropriate for the data collection exercise in a study of their nature, hence, its adoption from the total population of 1,470 a sample size of 306 comprising of two hundred and fifty-six (256) and fifty (50) was chosen for the conduct of the study this in accordance with the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) [21] which indicated that a sample size of three hundred and six (306) was enough for a population size of one thousand five hundred (1,500). The fact that the study's population is even below the stipulated number demonstrates the fairness that chosen sample for this study will be enough for the study.

**Analysis of Data**

Data generated from the respondents were arranged according to responses and analyzed using percentage (%) on such key issues as relevance.

**Table I: Types of Information**

Types of information	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Information on how to find the doctor	68	27%
Information on how to cope with my sickness	43	17%
Information on how and where drugs can be bought	51	20%
Information on how to prevent a re-occurrence	68	26%
Others specify	26	10.16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the above table 1, one thing that is abundantly clear from the pattern of distribution on respondents type of information is that, the needs are as varied as they are divergent. The distribution here even included the category which earlier responded negatively which may mean that contrary to the theoretical viewing of their information needs for information they do indeed, practically need all sorts of information. For instance, 68 or 27% respondents indicated their needs for information on how and where to get the doctor just as an equivalent number need to know how to prevent re-occurrence, yet another 51 or 20% and 43 or 17% would like to know how and where to get necessary drugs and knowing how to with their ailment respectively while 26 or 10% has a different view point not indicated.

**Table II: Means of Meeting Out-Patient Information Needs**

Media	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Books	10	4%
Audio Visual	53	21%
Telephone	23	9%
Face-to-Face	156	61%
Others specify	14	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table II above shows that 156 or 61% respondents were for face-to-face means constituting the majority. Only an insignificant proportion numbering 53 or 21% and another 10 or 4% were for audio visual and books respectively while the remaining 14 or 5% had no precise specification. The scenario above tend to give credit to fact that the majority of Nigerians were not disposed, at least willingly, to getting their from a non-oral means.

**Table III: Types of Information Services Provided by the Hospital**

Types of Information services	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Book loan to patients	15	19.73%
Information delivery to patients	38	50%
Audio-visual information provision	17	6%
Others specify	6	2.34%
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the question raised in table III only 76 or 29.69% responded of which 38 or 14.84% indicated information delivery to patients; 17 or 6.64% indicated audio-visual information provision and 15 or 5.87%, book loan to patients. Then of course, there is some case 6 or 2.34% responses that indicated others as well as those who did not ticks for that probably due to the lack of understanding of what to; this constitute some 180 or 70.31% responses.

Finally they were asked to express their opinion as to whether or not the present means of meeting their information needs was adequate and satisfying to which the majority numbering 151 or 58.98% answered no while the remaining 105 or 41.02% did otherwise. Similarly, as to what they consider the best way of improving the situation, some 52 or 20.31% suggested the stability ment of an information centre solely for this purpose while the reminders gave no response at all.



Table IV: Types of Information

Types of information	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Information on how to find the doctor	7	14%
Information on how to cope with my sickness	18	30%
Information on how and where drugs can be bought	3	4%
Information on how to prevent a re-occurrence	21	46%
Others specify	3	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

Probably, due to their status, in-patient are more interested in information about how to cope with their current sickness as well as on how to prevent a re-occurrence in the future more than anything else. Finding the doctor or getting the drug were not much of importance to them as these other types of information in contrast to their out-patient counterpart.

No surprising therefore that the majority of them precisely 38 or 76% re-affirmed this position when they indicated that they considered their information needs as being very important in respect to their sickness. Similarly, there was almost a complete unanimous opinion as to what the unit responsible for meeting these needs were 46 or 92% of their responses pointed to the information unit in the hospital and the individual doctor. Surprisingly enough, none actually pointed to the hospital library in this regard aside from the 4 or 8% indicating lack of knowledge.

As opposed to the out patients, the in-patients have as the means of meeting their information needs, such media as books, audio-visual and telephone representing 17 or 32%, 21 or 42% and 10 or 20% of the responses respectively. The remaining 2 or 4% have no tangible answer to give even as 37 or 74% against 13 or 26% declared that they do not know of the existence of a library in the hospital. The few that knew of its existence indicated that information delivery is the hallmark of its information service provision even as the majority did not respond at all. By and large, they advocated for the establishment of a special information centre whose primary duty will be to provide the wide spectrum of patients with a variety of information needed from time to time.

### Findings

The findings here is presented in accordance with the research which summaries thus:

- (1) Both in- and out patients of Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital, Zaria have variety of needs for information. This pattern was common among the various age groups of respondents comprising both the in and out patients alike regardless of their sex, occupational and educational differences. Their information needs are diverse as they are varied for groups of respondents; information needs have to do with how to find the doctor, prevent re-occurrence, how and where to get drugs and how to cope with their sickness.
- (2) The information unit of the hospital was found to be responsible in catering for respondents information needs using such media books, audio-visual and telephone in that order to achieve this goal even while the hospital has its library.
- (3) There was still room for improving the provision of information to patients. Hence, the need for the hospital library to rise up to the occasion. This, it can do by improving on its conventional services provision such as book delivery; book loan; audio-visual information provision to patients on a wide range of interests so as to be able to meet the diverse needs of both in- and out-patients of the hospital.
- (4) To present means of meeting these information needs still leaves much to be desired. This is because the information unit of the hospital, like that of any organization for that matter, has wider scope of responsibilities than just providing for the information needs of patients. The aspects of the information services provision full with traditional scope of the library institution here typified as the hospital library.

### CONCLUSION

On the basis of the above summary of the study's findings, it is hereby recommended that the hospital authority should raise up to the challenges of providing for its in and out-patient information needs. To this end, the potentials of the library in an hospital should be exploited to the fullest along side the activities carried out by the information unit. This is viewed against the background of the essence of adequately providing for patients information needs as one of the necessary factors for their coping with, recuperating and even preventing a re-occurrence.

**Recommendations**

On the strength of the summary of findings and conclusions made above, it is hereby recommended that:

- (1) the hospital authority should at regular intervals seek a knowledge of its patients information needs as a first step towards meeting these needs.
- (2) The hospital library, in liasion with the information unit, should collect materils considered necessary for facilitating information dissemination to these patients to be stocked in its collection.
- (3) Appropriate media should be employed in disseminating information to the patients aside from the traditional method of keeping materials waiting for users who in this particular case cannot come.
- (4) Emphasis in this regard should focus on the audio-visual means of disseminating information. This is because, the majority of the patients in public hospitals as in this case, full in the category of the non-educated poverty-stricken class who can hardly read or writes. To this class of patients, the traditional book services by the library will amount to waste effort.
- (5) Finally, the hsopital authority should consciously integrate this effort with the main stream of its overall activities so that with time, it becomes an integral part of it.

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