

## ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CHILDHOOD AUTISM AMONG PAEDIATRIC AND PSYCHIATRIC NURSES IN EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA

M.N. Igwe

*Psychological Medicine, Ebonyi State University Teaching Hospital, Abakaliki, Nigeria*

**Background:** There is increasing public and professional awareness of autism spectrum disorders with early recognition, diagnosis and interventions that are known to improve prognosis. Factors that influence knowledge about childhood autism among these nurses are not known. This study assessed knowledge about childhood autism among paediatric and psychiatric nurses.

**Methods:** Eighty specialist paediatric and psychiatric nurses were randomly selected. A

socio-demographic questionnaire and knowledge about childhood autism among health workers (KCAHW) questionnaire were administered to them.

**Results:** The mean score among the nurses was  $12.56 \pm 3.23$  out of 19 possible. The mean score for the paediatric nurses was  $11.784 \pm 3.64$  while psychiatric nurses had  $13.35 \pm 2.58$ . The mean scores in Domain 1 were  $6.17 \pm 1.75$  for the paediatric nurses and  $6.52 \pm 1.43$  for the psychiatric nurses. The mean scores in Domain 2 were  $0.65 \pm 0.48$  for the paediatric nurses and  $0.80 \pm 0.41$  for the psychiatric nurses. Domain 3 score was  $1.97 \pm 1.25$  for the paediatric nurses while psychiatric nurses scored  $2.62 \pm 1.23$ . Domain 4 scores were  $2.97 \pm 1.54$  and  $3.42 \pm 0.98$  for the paediatric and psychiatric nurses.

There was significant relationship between the mean score and area of specialisation ( $p = 0.03$ ) and there was also significant relationship between previous involvement in managing children with autism and the total mean score ( $p = 0.00$ ).

**Conclusion:** The scores reflect deficits in knowledge about childhood autism among the study cohorts. CME on childhood autism and expansion of curriculum are advocated.