



Patient care conflict resolution and care quality in Jos University Teaching Hospital

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Abstract

This study evaluates patient care conflicts within the male ward at Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH) and highlights their significant impact on care quality and patient satisfaction. A mixed-methods approach was employed, utilizing structured questionnaires and semi- interviews with healthcare providers and patients to gather comprehensive data. The results indicated that communication breakdowns, differing treatment preferences, and power dynamics were primary sources of conflict, leading to delays in treatment and negative health outcomes. Additionally, the study assessed current conflict resolution practices within the men's ward, identifying limitations and the need for improvement. It emphasizes the importance of effective communication and collaboration among healthcare professionals and patients in resolving conflicts. By analysing the underlying causes and evaluating existing strategies, the study proposes targeted recommendations, including enhanced training for healthcare staff, improved communication channels, and the establishment of a dedicated conflict resolution department. The significance of this study extends beyond JUTH, providing valuable insights for healthcare practitioners and policymakers aiming to foster a more harmonious healthcare environment. Ultimately, this study contributes to the understanding of patient care conflicts and offers practical strategies for improving conflict resolution practices, thereby enhancing overall patient care quality. By addressing these challenges, the study envisions a more effective and patient-centred healthcare system at JUTH and similar institutions

Keywords: Care quality, Conflict resolution, Jos University Teaching Hospital, Patient care

1. Introduction

The impression of health care professionals in the Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH) is that, conflicts in patient care disrupt the delicate balance between patient needs, medical realities, and human interactions, impacting care quality. The singular incident of the father of one of us, been hospitalised, marked by a moment where the pain and vulnerability of a patient clashed with the overwhelmed response of a nurse, extends beyond a personal experience. It reflects the wider challenges and intricacies of patient care and healthcare environments. This experience not only highlighted human

health's vulnerability but also shed light on significant deficiencies within our healthcare system, particularly in professional behaviour, emotional intelligence, and managing conflicts. This distressing incident for both the father and the nurse prompted deep reflection and a desire to learn more.

It drove us to investigate the complex interactions between patients and medical staff, the challenges caregivers face, and how crucial good communication and resolving conflicts. Recognizing this incident as a turning point, we began to question how frequently such transgressions occur, what systemic or



situational factors contribute to them, and what measures could be implemented to prevent them. This inquiry naturally evolved into a broader interest, aiming to dissect the intricate dynamics of healthcare environments, identify deficiencies in current conflict management strategies, and propose innovative solutions to enhance patient care quality. This incident isn't merely a one-off but rather a mirror to a common problem. This realization validates the need for academic research aimed at creating stronger, more compassionate, and efficient healthcare settings. It highlights the critical need for cultivating an environment that places patient welfare at the forefront, provides support for healthcare professionals, and promotes a culture of respect and empathy. This study aims to illuminate these conflicts within healthcare at JUTH. This study unveils hidden challenges, envisioning a more unified, patient-centric healthcare environment at JUTH.

Since its establishment in 1975, Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH) in Plateau State, Nigeria, has been a beacon of exceptional healthcare, education, and research (Jos University Teaching Hospital, n.d.). As a federal tertiary health institution, it not only delivers top-tier healthcare services to the residents of Plateau State and its surroundings but also plays a vital role in medical education and cutting-edge research in collaboration with the University of Jos. JUTH is celebrated for its integrated care approach, offering a wide range of medical services in specialties like cardiology, orthopaedics, neurology, and oncology. It is committed to 24/7 emergency services, community outreach, and promoting health through innovative research and patient care strategies (Jos University Teaching Hospital, n.d.). JUTH significantly mitigates the risks associated with poor-quality services, including harm, errors, infections, and complications, underscoring its legacy as a dynamic fusion

of healthcare, education, and research excellence in Nigeria (World Health Organization, 2021).

Conflict resolution strategies such as active listening, structured dialogue, appreciative inquiry, and mediation play a pivotal role in establishing trust, identifying root causes, and enhancing quality health care. Failure to address these conflicts may lead to decreased morale, compromised patient safety, reduced care quality, and increased costs, ultimately undermining the hospital's mission to deliver exceptional healthcare.

The objective is

1. To identify the primary sources and types of patient care conflict
2. To examine the impact of patient care conflict on care quality, patient satisfaction and health outcomes
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of current practices for resolving patient care conflict
4. To propose strategies for enhancing patient centred care conflict resolution mechanism

2. Literature Review

Healthcare delivery is essential for the well-being of any society, and in Nigeria, where numerous healthcare challenges exist; its importance cannot be overstated. Within this challenging environment, the management of patient care conflicts is a critical aspect that significantly influences the quality and efficiency of healthcare delivery. This literature review focuses on conflict management within the Nigerian healthcare system, with particular emphasis on the Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH) over the decade from 2013 to 2023.

Effective conflict management is crucial in healthcare settings to ensure high-quality patient care, improve staff satisfaction, and enhance the overall performance of healthcare institutions. This review aims to identify underexplored areas in the existing literature, addressing the intricate relationships between patient care



conflicts, conflict management, and healthcare delivery. By pinpointing these gaps, the review lays a foundation for deeper exploration of this crucial aspect of healthcare in Nigeria. Additionally, it draws insights from international best practices and comparative perspectives to offer a fresh and deep understanding of conflict management in the Nigerian healthcare context.

This review covers a range of key concepts, including the sources of patient care conflict, the impact of unresolved conflicts on patient outcomes and healthcare quality, and various conflict resolution strategies. It explores the specific challenges faced by teaching hospitals like JUTH, considering factors such as trainee involvement and diverse perspectives. Methodological approaches used in relevant studies are also reviewed to assess their strengths and limitations.

In healthcare settings, conflicts can emerge from various sources, each influencing patient care and healthcare quality in distinct ways. The following sections delve into key sources of these conflicts: communication breakdowns, disagreements about treatment plans, interpersonal dynamics, resource allocation, and cultural and ethical differences.

Communication breakdowns are a significant source of conflict in healthcare environments, with profound implications for patient care and outcomes. Effective communication is crucial for ensuring that healthcare services are delivered efficiently and safely. Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) offers a valuable framework for understanding how communication styles impact interactions in diverse healthcare settings. Communication Accommodation Theory, articulated by Giles and Ogay (2007), explores how individuals adjust their communication styles to accommodate their conversational partners. The theory distinguishes between convergence, where

speakers modify their communication to be more like their conversation partners, and divergence, where they emphasize differences to maintain distinct identities. In healthcare contexts, convergence is particularly important. Healthcare providers must adapt their communication to meet the diverse needs of patients and colleagues. For instance, explaining medical terms in simple language for patients unfamiliar with medical jargon, or adopting a more formal tone with professionals from different disciplines, can enhance mutual understanding and effectiveness in patient care. Inadequate or ineffective communication can lead to severe consequences in healthcare settings. These lapses might include delays in treatment or misunderstandings about patient needs, illustrating the urgent need for clear and structured communication protocols.

Conflicts often arise from disagreements about treatment plans, significantly affecting patient outcomes and staff collaboration. These disagreements can occur between healthcare providers and patients or among team members. Variations in medical opinions, treatment preferences, and interpretations of clinical data can lead to conflicts that impact decision-making processes.

Different healthcare providers may have varying opinions based on their training, experience, and specializations. For instance, a surgeon might prioritize surgical intervention, while a medical oncologist might advocate for chemotherapy as the first line of treatment. These differing perspectives can lead to conflicts within the medical team. A study by Swensen, Meyer, Nelson, Hunt, Pryor, Weissberg & Kaplan (2010) highlights how such variations can result in inconsistent care practices, ultimately affecting patient safety and outcomes.

Patients and their families may have preferences based on personal beliefs, cultural values, or previous experiences



with the healthcare system. For example, a patient may refuse a blood transfusion due to religious beliefs, which can conflict with the medical team's recommendation for the best outcome. Studies have shown that incorporating patient preferences into treatment planning is crucial for improving patient satisfaction and adherence to treatment (Charles, Gafni & Whelan, 1999).

A study by Manser (2009) found that regular team debriefings and open communication channels significantly reduce conflicts and improve team cohesion. Disagreements about treatment plans are a common source of conflict in healthcare settings. Addressing these conflicts requires fostering open dialogue, considering multiple perspectives, and working collaboratively to reach a consensus that aligns with the patient's needs and medical evidence. By implementing strategies such as patient-centred care, evidence-based guidelines, and conflict resolution training, healthcare providers can mitigate these conflicts and enhance the quality of patient care. Future research should continue to explore innovative approaches to managing treatment disagreements and their impact on healthcare outcomes.

Resource allocation is a fundamental issue in healthcare settings, often leading to significant conflicts over the distribution of limited resources such as medical supplies, staff, and budgets. Resource allocation conflicts frequently arise due to budget constraints, which can result in shortages of essential medical supplies and staff. This scarcity necessitates difficult decisions about prioritization, often leading to disputes among healthcare providers about how to allocate resources most effectively and fairly (Seixas, Regier, Bryan, & Mitton, 2021). Such decisions are often influenced by historical patterns and ad hoc judgments rather than explicit criteria and evidence-based practices. This lack of transparency and consistency can

exacerbate tensions and reduce trust among healthcare staff and patients. For instance, a study by Seixas et al. (2021) found that resource allocation decisions are often made without clear, evidence-based frameworks, leading to perceived and actual inequities in resource distribution. These inequities can negatively impact patient outcomes, particularly in underserved areas where resources are already scarce.

Vivar (2006) suggests that providing healthcare teams with the tools to handle disagreements constructively can enhance collaboration and improve the overall quality of care. Cultural competence is essential in healthcare to ensure that patient care is respectful of and responsive to the health beliefs, practices, and cultural and linguistic needs of diverse patients. Betancourt, Green, Carrillo & Ananeh-Firempong, (2003) argue that healthcare providers must understand cultural competence as an integral part of improving healthcare quality and reducing disparities among minority populations.

Healthcare conflicts often arise from cultural differences between patients and providers. According to Saha, Beach, and Cooper (2008), misunderstandings and miscommunications can lead to conflicts that affect patient care outcomes. Their study emphasizes the importance of cross-cultural education for healthcare professionals to mitigate such conflicts. Burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion and a sense of reduced personal accomplishment, can diminish healthcare workers' ability to provide compassionate and effective care (Shanafelt et al., 2012). High levels of stress and dissatisfaction can lead to increased absenteeism, turnover, and a decrease in the overall performance of healthcare staff.

This literature review establishes a foundation by analyzing existing literature, synthesizing findings, and identifying gaps. It highlights the importance of addressing specific challenges in patient



care conflict resolution while noting the limitations of existing studies in fully capturing JUTH's context. The research aims to bridge these gaps by focusing on practical solutions tailored to JUTH's men's ward. This approach will offer new insights into conflict management and patient care.

The literature review on resolving patient care conflicts provides valuable insights into conflict resolution complexities in healthcare settings. Key findings include various sources and types of conflicts, such as communication breakdowns and resource allocation challenges. The review also emphasizes the significant impact of unresolved conflicts on care quality, patient satisfaction, and health outcomes. Conflict resolution strategies like mediation, negotiation, and team-based approaches are explored, highlighting the importance of effective communication, empathy, and cultural sensitivity.

Here are two empirical studies related to this study and presented in a funnel approach: one global and one from African region in Nigeria.

Global Perspective

A study by Cullati et al. (2019) explored health care professional's experience with team conflicts in a Swiss teaching hospital and their perceived impact on patient care quality. The findings indicated that 41% of conflicts had potential consequences, such as delays in care and reduced patient centeredness. The study underscores the importance of addressing team conflicts to maintain high quality patient care.

African Region

A study by Aberese-Ako et al (2015) examined conflicts among health care professionals in Ghanaian hospitals and their impacts on patient care. The study highlighted that interprofessional conflicts, often stemming from unclear roles and power dynamics, adversely affect patient care quality. The study emphasizes the need for clear governance structures to mitigate such conflicts.

Ogunbanjo et al (2009) investigated the prevalence of conflict and moral distress among health care professionals in Nigeria and the role of ethics consultations in resolving these issues. The finding suggests that ethics consultations can be effective in addressing conflicts and reducing moral distress, thereby improving patient care outcomes.

3. Methodology

This study evaluates patient care conflicts in the men's ward of Jos University Teaching Hospital. A descriptive approach is chosen because it allows for a comprehensive examination of the sources, types, and impacts of conflicts, as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of current conflict resolution practices. The study utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative aspect involved the use of structured questionnaires to collect data on the frequency, types, and impacts of conflicts from both healthcare providers and patients. The qualitative component consists of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders to gain deeper insights into the experiences and perceptions surrounding patient care conflicts. By combining these methods, the study aims to present a well-rounded understanding of the issue and propose practical strategies for enhancing conflict resolution.

The study was conducted in the men's ward of Jos University Teaching Hospital, located in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. This hospital is a tertiary care center serving a large population, and the men's ward is specifically chosen due to its diverse patient demographic and the high volume of care provided. The study area is selected to provide a focused examination of patient care conflicts in a setting that is representative of other wards within the hospital.

This study includes all healthcare providers: doctors, nurses, support staff



and patients within the men's ward of Jos University Teaching Hospital.

4. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the data gathered through the questionnaires administered and provides an analysis based on the responses received. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed, with an 89% return rate, ensuring a robust representation of the study population.

The chapter is structured to address the research objectives systematically. First, it identifies key sources and types of conflict within the men's ward of Jos University Teaching Hospital. Next, it examines the impact of these conflicts on care quality, patient satisfaction, and health outcomes. Following this, it evaluates the effectiveness of current conflict resolution practices. Finally, it explores suggested strategies for improving conflict resolution, drawing insights from the respondents. By analyzing these aspects, it aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of patient care conflicts and offer practical recommendations for enhancing conflict management strategies.

The primary aim of this study was to evaluate and address patient care conflicts within Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH), focusing on the men's ward. The research employed a combination of questionnaires and interviews, with responses from both healthcare providers and patients. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed, and 134 were correctly completed and returned, ensuring a robust sample for analysis.

From the quantitative data, it was evident that communication issues between staff and patients were the most cited source of conflict, reported by 60% of respondents. This finding aligns with Participant's interview, who noted that miscommunication or misunderstandings often led to conflicts, making patients feel unheard or undervalued. This sentiment

emphasizes the critical role of effective communication in reducing patient dissatisfaction and improving care quality. Additionally, 22% of respondents mentioned misunderstandings about treatment plans as a key source of conflict, who stated that disagreements over treatment options often arise when patients feel their preferences are not considered. This correlates with Haynes et al. (2002), who argue that patient involvement in treatment decisions significantly improves satisfaction and minimizes conflict.

The study revealed that 46% of respondents believed that patient care conflicts had a significant impact on care quality. This finding is reinforced by Participant, who pointed out that frequent conflicts disrupt the continuity of care, leading to treatment delays and inconsistencies. This is consistent with Epstein et al. (2010), who found that unresolved treatment disagreements can result in lower staff morale, further compromising patient care. It showed that conflicts negatively affect decision-making processes and communication. Conflicts can cause a breakdown in communication, making it difficult for patients and staff to exchange crucial information. This is supported by Barry and Edgman-Levitan (2012), who argue that patient-centred care approaches improve communication and health outcomes.

The study found that 63% of respondents viewed the current conflict resolution practices as moderately effective. However, it emphasized that while communication is key to resolving conflicts, there is room for improvement, especially in training healthcare providers on conflict management skills. Secondary research by Vivar (2006) confirms the importance of integrating conflict resolution training into healthcare settings to equip staff with the necessary skills.

Leadership support was also identified as a crucial factor in effective conflict resolution. It highlighted the role of



leadership in promoting open communication and collaboration, a point supported by O'Daniel and Rosenstein (2008), who argue that strong leadership enhances team coordination and reduces conflicts.

In summary, patient care conflicts significantly impact care quality, patient satisfaction, and health outcomes. The study reveals that conflicts disrupt care continuity, reduce patient satisfaction, hinder effective communication, and elevate stress levels, thereby negatively influencing the overall patient care experience. Addressing these conflicts through effective resolution strategies is crucial for improving the quality of care and patient outcomes in the men's ward at JUTH.

To wrap things up, the findings of this study underscore the significant impact of patient care conflicts within the men's ward of Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH). The primary sources of conflict, such as communication issues and disagreements over treatment plans, have been shown to affect the quality of care, patient satisfaction, and staff stress levels. Effective conflict resolution practices, while present, show varying degrees of success, emphasizing the need for ongoing improvements.

The study reveals that conflicts not only disrupt care consistency but also lead to decreased patient satisfaction and increased stress among healthcare staff. While some current practices are deemed moderately effective, there is a clear indication that additional training, improved communication, and enhanced conflict resolution mechanisms are needed. The study highlights the importance of integrating patient-centered approaches into conflict resolution strategies to foster a more collaborative and effective care environment. This conclusion draws from the findings to suggest that addressing these conflicts requires a multifaceted approach involving better communication,

staff training, and systemic support to improve both patient and staff experiences in the men's ward.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has highlighted that patient care conflicts in the men's ward at JUTH significantly impact care quality, patient satisfaction, and health outcomes. The analysis reveals that while current conflict resolution practices provide some benefit, there are significant gaps in their effectiveness. The findings emphasize the need for improved training, better communication strategies, and more robust conflict resolution mechanisms. The study's insights suggest that addressing these issues through targeted strategies can enhance patient-centred care and improve overall outcomes in the ward. Continuous evaluation and refinement of these strategies are essential to ensure their effectiveness in resolving conflicts and promoting better care.

Based on the findings from this study, the following recommendations are made to address patient care conflicts in the men's ward of Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH):

1. The Management of JUTH Should Enhance Staff Training on Conflict Resolution by implementing comprehensive training programs for healthcare staff to focus on conflict resolution skills, effective communication, and de-escalation techniques to ensure that staffs are well-equipped to handle conflicts that arise in patient care settings.
2. The Hospital Administration Should Establish Clear Communication Channels between patients and healthcare providers. This can be achieved by introducing structured feedback systems, patient-care consultations, and regular team meetings to facilitate better information exchange and understanding.
3. JUTH Should Create a Peace and Conflict Resolution Department and Mediation services. This department would



focus on resolving disputes between Patients and staff, fostering peaceful interactions, and promoting a culture of Understanding within the hospital. The department should also provide mediation Services and collaborate with healthcare staff to integrate peace building principles into daily operations

4. The Hospital's Board Should Implement Regular Reviews of Conflict Resolution Practices. This system would involve periodic assessments of the effectiveness of communication, training, and mediation efforts. By continuously evaluating and refining these practices, JUTH can ensure that conflicts are managed more efficiently, leading to better patient care outcomes and a more harmonious work environment.

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