Author’s response to reviews

Title: Pharmacists’ knowledge, attitude and involvement in palliative care in selected tertiary hospitals in southwest Nigeria

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Author’s response to reviews:

POINT-BY-POINT RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS AND EDITORS COMMENTS IN RESPECT OF OUR MANUSCRIPT CODED: PCAR-D-19-00163

Dear Editor,

BMC Palliative Care

We are very grateful for the comments received in respect of our Manuscript coded: PCAR-D-19-00163 and titled Pharmacists knowledge, attitude and involvement in palliative care in selected tertiary hospitals in southwest Nigeria We have found the comments quite useful

Kindly find below the point-by-point response to reviewers and editors comments in respect of our manuscript. Details of clarifications and modifications made to the original manuscript are included in appropriate sections of this revised version. The locations for modifications and inclusions in the revised manuscript are indicated in this response letter.

Editor Comments:

Thank you for your revisions. The manuscript is much improved.

Please attend to the comments below. These mainly relate to your English, please go through each section and check word use and sentence structure. Please ask a colleague who is a native English speaker to check your revisions before submission.

RESPONSE

We are very grateful for the commendation by the editor.
In line with the suggestion, the entire revised manuscript has been comprehensively edited and proofread by a native English speaker, and all the corrections pointed out have been appropriately effected in the revised manuscript. See the entire revised manuscript for the effected corrections.

Reviewer reports:

Ebiere Clara Herbertson, M.Pharm, M.Phil, MHPM (Reviewer 1): Well done! Great improvement. Just two minor grammar errors on line 262 - focus NOT "focused" and line 275 - providers NOT "provider"

RESPONSE

We quite appreciate the reviewers observation in this regard. The two grammatical errors pointed out have been appropriately corrected. See the discussion section page 12, line 269, and page 13, line 282 in the revised manuscript for the corrections.

Bridget Candy (Reviewer 2):

English

RESPONSE

We quite appreciate reviewers comments and observations in these regards. We have found them very useful, and especially it has help us to closely revise the entire manuscript for grammar and sentence errors with appropriate corrections effected.

* Still some sentences that are not clear. For example, 'advising other health team'. Here do you mean advising other health team members, or advising other health teams.

RESPONSE

The revision done by the native English speaker has made us rephrase many of the unclear sentences to ensure better flow and understanding by the reader. Also the specific sentence pointed out in the comment has been appropriately corrected. The correction in respect of the statement can be seen in the results section, page 10, line 209 in the revised manuscript.

And on page 9 line 197 'agreed to enjoy" better to state 'they enjoyed working in pall care'. And page 10, line 222 'statement related to opinion on the extent of familiarity' this sentence would be clearer if you just said 'the extent of familiarity with managing various pain symptoms in pall care significantly differed'.
The statements referred to in the comment above have been appropriately rephrased. See the results section, page 9, line 202, and page 10, line 218, 225 in the revised manuscript for the corrections.

* in discussion 'barely 30% of pharmacists do not mind working in palliative care'. This sentence is clear. It would be clearer if you stated 'around a third of pharmacists state they are happy/comfortable to work in palliative care'. This is, so long as this does not deviate from the survey question.

RESPONSE

The concerned sentence has been rephrased to be clearer in the revised manuscript. More so, the study questionnaire was revisited so as to ensure that the original meaning and context is still intact. See the discussion section, page 13, line 278-279 in the revised manuscript for the modifications.

* In discussion (page 13, line 276) you say 'unfold' the unmet', this explanation is not clear. Please revise

RESPONSE

The sentence in question has been appropriately rephrased for clarity of expression, as well as to convey better meaning and comprehension. See the discussion section, page 13, line 283-285 in the revised manuscript for the adjustments

* Past and present tense confusion

RESPONSE

The comprehensive revision done by the native English speaker in the revised manuscript has been able to generally address the grammatical errors throughout the manuscript. See the entire revised manuscript and specifically discussion section, page 13, line 282-285 for some of the corrections made.

* Singular and plural confusion (e.g. is and are). In discussion page 13, line 275 Healthcare provider, should read healthcare providers. Pains should be pain (page 13 line 282.

RESPONSE

The corrections in respect of this comment can be seen in the discussion section, page 13, line 282, and same page, line 291 in the revised manuscript.
* Sentencing missing a word, e.g. page 8, third sentence should start 'The majority, 72 (65.5%).

RESPONSE

See the results section, page 8, line 180 in the revised manuscript for the corrections

* 'found to be familiar with experience of various' would be better worded as 'to be familiar with pain symptoms in palliative care

RESPONSE

See the results section, page 10, lines 218 and 225, and discussion sections, page 14, line 297 - 298 in the revised manuscript for the rephrase of the statement.

Abstract

* Second sentence does not follow first. Perhaps something more like: 'This study aimed to explore the involvement in Nigeria of hospital pharmacists in PC. It sought to gauge their knowledge and attitude to PC and what may hinder their involvement'.

RESPONSE

We are quite grateful for the reviewers comments in this regard. We have found the comments very useful. The background section of the abstract has been appropriately revised for better flow and coordination of the sentences. See the background section of the abstract in the revised manuscript, page 2, line 25 - 27 for the modifications

* Method - need some information on what you mean as adequate or inadequate and also positive or negative.

RESPONSE

The comments pointed out have been appropriately addressed. See the method section of the abstract, page 2, line 33 -35 in the revised manuscript for the inclusions

* Results: Need numbers in survey and response rate.

RESPONSE

This comment has been appropriately addressed in the revised abstract. See the abstract section, page 2, line 37 of the revised manuscript for the corrections
Background

I think the last section on this needs some revision. This is the section where you are stating why your research is important and needed and what it will achieve. You need to make it clear that your project is building on the references 28-30. You need to make it clear that referenced 16,30,33 are not from Nigeria. As it reads currently it looks like it is, and so you then wonder why your study is needed. When you state other resource-poor countries can you give an example country and a reference if possible. A final sentence would be good on how the information you gather could be taken forward (inform practice, policy perhaps).

RESPONSE

We really appreciate the reviewers constructive observation and comments in this regard. The observations are quite helpful, and it has enables us to concisely revise the paragraph. As rightly observed by the reviewer, references 16, 30 and 33 are for studies conducted in developed countries and they are not from Nigeria. Therefore, the paragraph has been clearly rephrased to indicate this, while necessary information was provided to justify the need for our study. Also, as rightly suggested by the reviewer, we have included a statement in the last sentence under the background that indicate how the information obtained from our study can be further utilized. See the background section of the revised manuscript, page 4, line 78-91, and page 5, 92-93 for the modifications.

Method

Can you say why you selected the three tertiary hospitals?

RESPONSE

The tertiary hospitals used for this study were selected largely on the fact that they are major hospitals in the southwest geopolitical zone with established palliative care services. This reason has been appropriately included in the revised manuscript. See the method section, page 5, line 97 in the revised manuscript for the inclusion.

I don't think declining should be mentioned as an exclusion criteria. Perhaps instead you could say working less then one year in the hospital was the exclusion (and thereby delete it in the inclusion).

RESPONSE

As rightly observed by the reviewer, we have seen the need to rephrase the inclusion ad exclusion statements, and corrections have been appropriately effected in the revised manuscript. See the method section, page 5, line 112 -113 in the revised manuscript for the modifications.

on page 7 first line (line 138) you say you excluded another teaching hospital. Do you mean rather that this hospital was not involved in the study - if you did exclude it can you say why?
RESPONSE

This observation is quite appreciated, because it has really enables us to make clarification on the status of hospital where the pharmacists used for the pretest of the study instrument were chosen. Actually, the hospital used for the pretest is a state-owned specialist hospital notable for chronic disease management. Even though, it is usually involve in some forms of training for other ancillary health personnel including nurses, but the hospital is neither affiliated to any institution of higher learning nor involved in the clinical training for physician and pharmacists. As such, it may not be absolutely categorised as a teaching hospital. The choice of the hospital for the pretest was borne out of the fact that, the hospital is specially established for the management of patients with various chronic diseases, and it is a well-known hospital in the region for many years, with notable achievements in this regard. Nevertheless, the observation of the reviewer has been carefully considered and the concerned sentence has been appropriately rephrased for clarity, as well as to convey the exact status of the hospital used for the pretest. Moreover, the concern about the non-coverage of all hospitals has also been captured in the study limitation. For details of these clarifications, see the method section, page 7, line 142-143, also under limitation in the discussion section, page 16, line 360-362 in the revised manuscript for the inclusions.

What is pharmacist grade one cadre? Page 9 the first paragraph has two sentences where it is unnecessary to state the number that did not. This is as it is obvious from the earlier section of each sentence the number that did not.

RESPONSE

Pharmacist grade 1 cadre is a cadre for the pharmacist who has spent between one and three years of full-time employment in the hospital practice. In Nigeria, it is usually the entry point for pharmacists into the hospital practice setting. See the result section, page 8, line 182, and page 9, line 183 in the revised manuscript for clarification and inclusion.

Also, the corrections pointed out in the first paragraph of page 9 have been appropriately effected in the revised manuscript. See the results section, page 9, line 189-190 in the revised manuscript for the adjustments.

Results

Response rate 100% - well done - suggests the topic of the question was of great interest. Make sure you mention this strength in the discussion.

RESPONSE

The observation of the reviewer in this regard has been appropriately captured in the revised manuscript. See the discussion section, page 11, line 235-237 in the revised manuscript for the modifications.
Page 10, line 208 can you clarify whose lack of awareness of need for pharmacists in palliative care? Was it the pharmacist, or hospital policy.

RESPONSE

The sentence referred to in the comment has been appropriately rephrased for better understanding of the study finding in this context. Participants actually reported lack of awareness of their need in palliative care as a major factor hindering involvement in palliative care services. It is the pharmacists themselves who reported their own lack of awareness of their need in palliative care. See the results section, page 10, line 211-212, also the discussion section page 15, line 326 in the revised manuscript for the effected corrections.

Discussion

First sentence would read better if you replaced 'showed' with 'had' and also instead of nearly 80% just give the actual % and likewise for almost 65% and approx 94%.

RESPONSE

The first sentence as suggested by the reviewer has been appropriately rephrased. See the discussion section, page 11, line 237 in the revised manuscript for the effected corrections.

Also, all the exact percentages for the key findings have been appropriately inserted in the respective sections, while in some cases the percentage was translated into an estimate for better appreciation of the specific finding in relation to the entire study participants. See the discussion section, page 11, line 237-240 in the revised manuscript for the modifications.

It would also read better if the first sentence in the discussion reminds the reader what the aim of the study was. Then from the second sentence you present a summary of your key results.

RESPONSE

We quite appreciate the reviewers comment in this regard. The suggestions have been appropriately effected in the revised manuscript. See the discussion section, page 11, line 233-242 in the revised manuscript for the modifications.

When you introduce O'connor can say where he/she is reported on the situation in Nigeria, and also the studies 14-16, 31, 32 etc. It is good you have detailed where you can if the research is from a developed/developing country.

RESPONSE
These observations are quite appropriate, it has enable us to put the concerned sentences in proper perspective. References 14-16, 31, 32 were studies carried out in developed countries, especially among the community pharmacists. To the best of our knowledge, there is presently no study from Nigeria that has comprehensively evaluates knowledge, attitude and involvement of pharmacists in palliative care. Thus the necessity of using the studies from some developed countries to buttress some of our study findings. However, information on where and the context of the supporting studies have been concisely provided in the revised manuscript. See the discussion section, page 11, line 242-246, same page, line 246-249 in the revised manuscript for the modifications.

Here you refer to palliative care training of pharmacists - make sure you have adequately described current palliative care training in Nigeria in the background.

RESPONSE

The statement related to this sentence has been concisely rephrased in the revised manuscript. This rephrase becomes necessary in order to appropriately put our study findings in the proper context. Though, in Nigeria, there is generally lack of palliative care training in most pharmacy schools. The Benchmark for Minimum Academic Standard from the two major regulatory agencies for pharmacy education in Nigeria, that is the National University Commission and the Pharmacists Council of Nigeria does not include aspects on palliative care in their curriculum contents. Thus, it has not been made mandatory for schools of pharmacy to incorporate the palliative care concept into the pharmacy education curriculum. Nevertheless, the reviewers observation in this regard has been carefully considered, while the manuscript has been revised accordingly to ensure clarity and ease of comprehension by the reader. See the background section page 4, line 81-85, and the discussion section, page 11, line 246-248 in the revised manuscript for the inclusions and modifications

Page 13, line 278. Sentence starting ‘worthy of mention is the fact’ word use and clarity of this sentence is needed. The sentence would benefit from being more concise and it is not clear to me how training without knowing why they feel sad with help. Instead you could say ‘around a half of the pharmacists agreed with the statement that it is sad and depressing working with terminally ill patients. This finding needs to be further explored in research to understand reasons.

RESPONSE

The reviewers observation in this regard is quite appreciated, we have found it very useful. The statements have been appropriately rephrased to convey better understanding, while necessary clarification provided to further explain the context of the statement and what the finding connotes in relation to palliative care practice generally. See the discussion section, page 13, line 285-290 in the revised manuscript for the adjustments and clarifications.
Sentence page 13 line 283 starting 'Nevertheless' does not flow from the sentence before it.

**RESPONSE**

The statement in question has been appropriately and concisely revised to ensure better coordination of the sentence. See the discussion section, page 13, line 285-292, and 292-294 in the revised manuscript for the modifications.

Sentence page 15, line 320 starting 'however' confidence issue should be confidence issues. Again, same page line 338.' though, this study provide' should read 'though, this study provides'.

**RESPONSE**

The grammatical errors pointed out in this regard have been appropriately corrected. See the discussion section, page 15, line 330, and page 16, line 349 in the revised manuscript for the corrections.

Thank you