INTRODUCTION

Rational use of medicines is used by the World Health Organization (WHO) to refer to when patients receive medications that are individualized in doses appropriate to their clinical conditions for an adequate period of time, which they should get at the lowest possible cost to them and their community [1, 2]. This Expert Committee definition infers that rational drug use involves both the prescription and dispensing of the right drug to the right patient. The WHO estimates that half of the medicines prescribed, dispensed and sold are inappropriate and half of all patients take their drugs incorrectly. This inappropriate use of medicines has no regional bias: studies have proven that it is a global healthcare problem, especially in the developing countries [3-5]. A salient implication of the definition by WHO is that rational use of medicines has medical, social and economic effects on the patients, and by extension, their communities. About 75% of the world population lives in the developing countries, 25-50% of whom have little or no access to essential medicines[6, 7]. Those countries have weak healthcare systems that have little or no capacity to monitor drug use adequately.

Medication errors occur more frequently than expected. A mean prescription error rate of 28.7% was recorded in a retrospective study in Nigeria [8], although a higher rate of 76.3% was recorded two years earlier [9]. Still in Nigeria, the incidence of self-reported medication error among doctors, pharmacists and nurses was 47% [10]. Lazarou et al. reported that in 1994 US, fatal adverse drug events (ADEs) were the sixth leading cause of death. They also reported that 10.9% of all inpatients experience some ADEs, while 2.1% of admissions resulted in serious events [11]. Most medications errors occur at the point of selecting therapeutic plans for the patients [12, 13]. The importance of adding the expertise of a clinical pharmacist on the rounding process has been proposed as a way of addressing the occurrence of medication errors. This stemmed from the fact that lack of adequate information primarily about the therapeutic agent as well as the patients contributes a lot to medication errors. In the intensive care unit (ICU) alone, the inclusion of a pharmacist on a rounding team reduced the incidence of ADEs by two-thirds [14].

The rational use of the drug is important to ensure that those that have access to medicines optimally utilize them. This requires interventions at the points of prescription and dispensing of medicines. A clinical intervention refers to an intentional action that is appropriately designed to produce a desired health-related outcome, thereby creating research evidence and knowledge [15]. Clinical intervention can be initiated by any health professional. The pharmacist is uniquely positioned between the prescriber and the patient. A pharmacist-initiated intervention can prevent or resolve the prescription error and even dispensing error [16-19]. Over the years, Pharmacy practice has evolved from the traditional roles of drug dispensing and compounding to a more proactive approach to patient care. This involves the optimization of medication therapy and promoting health, wellness, and disease prevention through pharmaceutical care. The growth of Pharmacy practice has led to a need for modification of the training and educational requirements of pharmacists. Hence, training beyond didactic lectures in class is required, and is best achieved through clerkship/clinical rotation in hospitals. In Nigeria, the rotation is conducted in the final semester of undergraduate Pharmacy studies for about 3 mo [20]. Students undergoing clerkship are expected to rotate round all units in the hospital, learning skills that were not acquired through didactic lectures. The goal of the clerkship programme is to equip students with clinical skills, knowledge and professional behaviours necessary to care for the patient. It also furnishes them with the ability to identify and resolve drug-related problems through patient information retrieval and assessment. The several contributions of pharmacy students to patient care in the US have been mentioned to include the provision of patient education, optimization of
The students were required to document all clinical activities performed, which served as a learning tool for the students on how pharmacists keep track of clinical interventions. Clinical interventions involved written and verbal interactions with other healthcare professionals, patients, and caregivers, and were documented on a paper data collection form for the period of the study. An intervention documentation pro forma, following the interventions identified by Leape et al. was prepared for the pharmacists. The form captured medication error based on the intervention types to include: (1) drug-drug interaction, (2) lack of patient education, (3) recommendation of alternative therapeutic course, (4) identification of drug allergy, (5) wrong patient, (6) inappropriate dosage/frequency, (7) approval of non-formulary use of a drug, (8) additional medication, (9) patients education, (10) additional laboratory, and (11) drug/food interaction [14, 32].

Students were instructed at the start of their clerkship by pharmacist preceptors on how to appropriately document clinical interventions using the documentation instrument in use and this training was consistent over time and across the two hospitals. A pharmacist preceptor reviewed each intervention entered by the students for appropriateness and accuracy of documentation. The analysis included data from all student pharmacists in both hospitals who were trained on intervention documentation and whose intervention was approved by the pharmacist preceptor as being valid. All data collected were collated and entered into the IBM Statistical Products and Service Solutions (SPSS) for Windows, Version 21.0 by pharmacist preceptors for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including mean and percentages, were used to analyze data obtained. This study was conducted after obtaining ethical approval from the Health Research and Ethics committee of the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital (UNTH) Enugu State.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Methods**

This study involved a cross-sectional review of clinical interventions by final year students of University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) for three years (2015-2017). They completed a 3-month clerkship each year at a secondary hospital (Bishop Shanahan Hospital, BSH, Nsukka) and a tertiary hospital (University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, UNTH, Enugu) in Enugu State, Nigeria. As part of the clerkship, students participated in teams during clinical activities to document medication therapy management and patient safety. Each team is allowed access to the patient folder after clinical rotation for optimizing medication therapy management and patient safety. Each clerkship, students participated in teams during clinical activities to optimize medication therapy management and patient safety. Each student was instructed at the start of their clerkship by pharmacist preceptors on how to appropriately document clinical interventions using the documentation instrument in use and this training was consistent over time and across the two hospitals. A pharmacist preceptor reviewed each intervention entered by the students for appropriateness and accuracy of documentation.

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**Table 1: Characteristics of the patients**

| Age (Years) | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------|-----------|------------|
| ≤ 6         | 46        | 14.9       |
| 7-18        | 47        | 15.3       |
| 19-35       | 92        | 29.9       |
| 36-50       | 61        | 19.8       |
| ≥51         | 62        | 20.1       |
| Total       | 308       | 100.0      |

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| Male   | 151       | 49.0       |
| Female | 157       | 51.0       |
| Total  | 308       | 100.0      |

**Table 2: Clinical interventions by the student pharmacists**

| Intervention | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| No indication/discontinue medication | 24 | 7.8 |
| Alternative/additional medication | 26 | 8.4 |
| Antibiotic recommendations | 5 | 1.6 |
| Duration of therapy | 22 | 7.1 |
| Inappropriate dosage/frequency | 30 | 9.7 |
| Incorrect route/route/time of administration | 3 | 1.0 |
| Pharmacokinetic monitoring | 22 | 7.1 |
| Additional labs indicated | 29 | 9.4 |
| Adverse drug event | 3 | 1.0 |
| Therapeutic duplication | 40 | 13.0 |
| Drug interaction | 43 | 14.0 |
| Allergy clarification/prevention | 3 | 1.0 |
| Contra-indication to therapy | 8 | 2.6 |
| Medication identification | 2 | 0.6 |
| Wrong patient | 1 | 0.3 |
| Patient/family education | 36 | 11.7 |
| Drug information | 6 | 1.9 |
| Parenteral to oral route conversion | 2 | 0.6 |
| Indication without therapy | 2 | 0.6 |
| Total | 308 | 100.0 |
RESULTS

The students documented interventions for four hundred and thirty-one (431) patients, but three hundred and eight (308) were judged valid. There were more females among the patients (157) and most were aged 19-35 y (92) (table 1). The most common types of interventions performed were drug-drug interactions (14%), therapeutic duplication (11%), and patient and family education (11.7%) (table 2). Common drugs involved in the interventions were fusomide (intravenous) (3.6%), artesunate (intravenous) (2.9%), ceftriaxone (intravenous) (2.6%), and diclofenac (oral) (2.6%). The most common additional laboratory test recommended was Serum-Electrolyte-Liver Creatinine (SEUCr) (30.77%) (table 3). The most common form of patient education rendered was on dietary and lifestyle modifications in ulcer (1.9%) (table 4). No characteristic of the patients had a statistically significant relationship with the types and frequency of clinical interventions.

DISCUSSION

Practical education of Pharmacy students on clinical matters is frequently thought to be expensive and not cost-saving to the institutions where the students train. This study shows that students have an impact as it relates to both drug information provision and recommendations made during rotations. The study also establishes the importance of bedside teaching as proven in an Indian study [33]. Most interventions in this study were made about female patients. A similar result was reported in a study in the Netherland, where interventions about males accounted for 41% [34]. A study in Oman also reported males to be less (42.9%) [35]. Possible explanation is that female patients may be more interested in knowing about drugs, their indications and any drug therapy problems from pharmacists or that more females visit the hospital when sick than males hence are more on admission. In contrast, a study in Australia revealed that 78.9% of the patients were males [34, 36, 37].

The most common types of interventions performed were drug interactions, therapeutic duplication and patient/family education. This is in contrast with a study by Kucukarslan et al. where the most common interventions documented were dosing-related changes and recommendations to add a drug to the therapeutic course [32]. Most of the clinical interventions on drug interaction were potential and not actual drug interaction. However it is of paramount importance to point out these potential interactions as it will help in quick identification of adverse effects and immediate withdrawal of inciting drug in a case of actual adverse drug reaction.

The original aim of clinical pharmacy as a professional practice (and not just a health science) is providing pharmaceutical care which involves patient education. In this study, education on dietary/lifestyle modification and medication use for ulcer patients were the highest. This education is necessary as most patients may likely engage in self-medication with over the counter drugs which are mainly NSAIDs. Most ulcer patients may have had education on diet from the nurses or another health professional, hence educating them on the effects of some drugs such as ibuprofen and diclofenac on their system will help them avoid exacerbation of symptoms. Education of pharmacy students and clinical pharmacy residents, while providing valuable care component to patients and other health-care providers, can successfully be performed as shown by the results of our program implemented in a teaching hospital. Therapeutic duplication was also observed among prescriptions that had two or three medicines that belong to the same class of drug for the same indication. This observation may be due to overtreatment by prescriber following a patient’s complaint of symptom exacerbation. The practice would be condemned, if the prescriptions contain antibiotics [38].

The rate of drug information (DI) requests in this study was very low compared to an Iranian study among Clinical Pharmacy residents where 22.30% of all interventions were drug information. Information on new drugs is usually received from pharmaceutical company representatives, which could sometimes be biased and misleading in clinical practice [40].

Some limitations are acknowledged in our study. Students may have documented only interventions they recollected based on the perceived favorable outcome on patient care, as recognized in another study [24]. In addition, they may have been more likely to document the interventions that got accepted. This may have underestimated the total clinical interventions performed. Student pharmacists’ interventions were all performed under the
supervision of the pharmacist preceptors. However, for some interventions, the students may have received assistance from the preceptor in performing the intervention. The number of interventions for which students received assistance against those that were student-driven was not quantified. The performance and documentation of clinical interventions by students helps to contribute to their active learning process and preparation as future pharmacists [21].

CONCLUSION

Final year pharmacy students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka demonstrated competencies in experiential education. Their contributions to patient care were in collaboration with patients themselves, and other members of the healthcare team. Their major role was documented to be making pharmacotherapy recommendations to prescribers.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

Ebere conceived and designed the study and analyzed and interpreted the data. Abdulkumari drafted and revised the article while Maxwell participated in the data acquisition and drafting of the article. All authors approved the final version to be submitted.

CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS

Declared none

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