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Perspective of young drivers towards the care of the road traffic injured

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The existing structure of pre-hospital trauma care in developing countries is largely deficient. The goal of this study was to determine the knowledge and attitude of young drivers towards the care of the road traffic injured. This was a descriptive cross sectional study which we carried out among undergraduates of the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology Campus, Ogbomosho, Oyo state, Nigeria using a stratified random sampling technique. Of the total 457 returned questionnaire, only 396 were sufficiently filled to warrant inclusion in the study. Of this number of respondents, 80% (317) were males. The mean age of the respondents was 23 years. While 82.2% (326) of the respondents will attempt to offer victims of road traffic crash some resuscitative measures at the scene, only 30% (119) claimed to have received some form of training in first aid care of the injured. Only 0.5% (2) of the total respondents knew the universal telephone number of 112 or 911 to call in the event of road traffic crash. Young drivers are well motivated and are more likely to confront emergency situations in road traffic crashes. Training them to function as pre-hospital care provider will add to the efficacy of pre hospital care.

Key words: Young driver, road traffic injured, pre-hospital care, training.

INTRODUCTION

The nature of the initial care given to the road traffic injured patient impacts significantly on the outcome of treatment. This care should be given within the frame work of a trauma system. A trauma system encompasses trauma prevention, pre-hospital care, hospital care, rehabilitation, system administration, trauma care education and training, trauma care evaluation and quality improvement, along with the participation of society (Bigdeli et al., 2010). The goal of this system is to provide early and adequate initial care for the injured patient within the golden hour in order to reduce the morbidity and mortality that may result from such injury. The consequences of a crash can be significantly minimized by promptly providing effective pre-hospital services (Bazzoli, 1999; Elvik et al., 2004).

The existing structure of trauma care in most developing countries is largely deficient. For instance, in most of these countries, transport of road traffic victims is usually provided by relatives, taxi drivers, truck drivers, police officers and other motorists; who are usually

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untrained and have to drive along a network of poor roads (Mock et al., 2002; Kobusingye et al., 2005). It is also a common situation in a country like Nigeria to see people gather at the scene of a road traffic crash largely to catch a glimpse of what is happening. Some do volun-teer to extricate and pour water over the living victims as a means of resuscitation however; most of the individuals who eventually help in the transport of these road traffic injured victims have no knowledge or training in the initial care of the injured. Significant numbers of neurological injuries appear to be a result of the extra-cation process or victim transportation as a result of wrong positioning and failure to protect the spine with immobilization (Cloward, 1980; Podolsky et al., 1983).

Training drivers, especially young ones, can help improve the quality immediate post crash care (Tiska et al., 2004). This is beneficial in that fellow drivers are one of the people who, driving along the road would be the first to arrive at a crash scene. If equipped with some basic skills, they can often provide care and transport-tation for road traffic crash victims. This education is particularly important for young drivers because by leveraging on the credibility young people have for one another, a multiplier effect can be created whereby young drivers can pass down the skills gained to their peers (Sloane et al., 1993). The power of role modeling easily plays out in this case.

The goal of this study was to find a baseline in terms of the knowledge and attitude of young drivers towards the care of the road traffic injured and further to this, develop intervention measures to help equip these young drivers with the necessary knowledge and skill in the initial care of injured road users.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a descriptive cross-sectional study which we carried out at the Ladoke-Akintola University of Technology Campus, Ogbomoso, Oyo state, Nigeria. This is a tertiary educational institution located in Ogbomoso North local government area of Oyo State. The institution was established on the 23rd April 1990 and has 6 faculties and a college and with a student population of about 25, 000. In performing this study, we obtained ethical clearance from the ethical committee of the institution. For the purpose of this study, we listed the various faculties in the institution and the departments in each faculty. Using a stratified random sampling, we selected departments to be sampled from each of the faculties.

We recruited all young drivers in the institution who are students in the selected departments, and who gave their written consent to participate in the study. For the purpose of this study, a young driver was defined as an adult between the ages of 18 and 30 years who had ever driven a vehicle on a highway in the preceding 12 months.

We used a pre-tested structured questionnaire to collate information relating to the (1) Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, (2) knowledge of initial care of the injured and (3) Willingness to acquire knowledge in the care of the road traffic injured. We explained the purpose of the study to the students in the departments to be included in the study, and obtained consent for the study from them. We distributed questionnaire to students in the chosen departments who gave their written consent to the study and students who did not consent were excluded from the study.

Data analysis

Statistical evaluation was carried out with the use of the SPSS software package (SPSS 17.0, Chicago, Illinois) and descriptive statistics was used to analyse the biodemographic characteristics of the respondents.

RESULTS

Of the total 457 returned questionnaire, only 396 were sufficiently filled to warrant inclusion in the study. The male respondents were 80% (317) of the total respon-dents. The mean age of the respondents was 23 years with a range of 16-30 years. An assessment action to be taken at the scene of an accident revealed 4.2% (17) will stand and look, 82.2% (326) will ensure first, they are not in danger before offering help and 4.6% (18) would simply walk away and hope help comes soon. Only an average of 0.5% (2) of the respondents knew either the universal telephone number of 112 or 911 to call in the event of road traffic crash (Table 1). Fifty percent (198) of the respondents said they could administer first aid to an accident victim even though only 30% (119) said they had received some form of training in first aid care. However, when ask if they were willing to have some basic training in the care of the injured, 85% (337) of the response was in the affirmative.

DISCUSSION

Response time is considered an important criterion in assessing the quality of care provided to trauma patients (Carr et al., 2006). The role of lay people who are present at a crash scene should be to contact the emergency services; help to put out fires; and take action to secure the crash scene (Mock et al., 2002). One way of ensuring help arrives the scene of an accident early enough is having a national emergency rescue number.

Only a very small percentage of our respondents knew this number. The implication of this is that even when these young drivers are not skilled in offering first aid to accident victims, they lack the necessary information needed to seek appropriate help. When calls are able to get to the call centers from a single code, the staff at the centers can immediately re-direct the distress call to the appropriate channel and to the nearest location to the scene of the incident, for prompt rescue action. The Nigerian Communications Commission's presently works with the 112 code for telephone users to reach all emergency service like the Fire Service Commission, Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) and Ambulance Services.

Most of the respondents agree that ensuring their own safety was a priority ever before attempting to rescue the

Table 1. Showing knowledge and attitude of young drivers at the scene of an accident.

Parameter	Action at scene of accident				Emergency rescue number known		Basic training in resuscitation	
	Stand and look	Safety first	Not sure	Walk away	Yes	No	Yes	No
Frequency	17(4.2%)	326(82%)	36(9%)	18(4.6%)	2(0.5%)	394(99.5%)	119(30%)	277(70%)
		396(100%)				396(100%)		396(100%)

accident victims, and fairly good number of the respondents claim they could administer first aid care to accident victims. However, only half of those who said they could administer first aid care had had any form of training in the immediate care of a road traffic injured victim. The other half with no formal training were obviously positively disposed to helping the road traffic injured and will be good candidates for a formal training.

Eighty-five percent of our respondents indicated an interest in undergoing a training that equips them to administer basic life support. Training motivated citizens, such as young drivers, who are more likely to confront emergency situations to function as pre-hospital care providers have been noted to add to the efficacy of pre-hospital care. These drivers can help improve crash scene management as is been noted that drivers are often first on the crash scene and can often offer transportation as well for the victims (Tiska, 2004). A previous study from Nigeria showed that only 6% of injured victims were transported to hospitals in ambulances while 94% were taken in private cars and public vehicles (Adeyemi-Doro et al., 1999). This adds support to the rationale of training drivers in first aid care.

It has been noted that when pre-hospital transportation is poor or absent, deaths that could have been prevented, even by inexpensive procedures, occur (Bull World Health Organ, 2005). A study in Ghana in which a total of 335 commercial drivers were trained using a 6-h basic first aid course revealed a considerable improvement in the provision of the components of first aid in comparison to what was reported before the course (Mock, 2002). In a study by Solagberu et al. (2009) in Nigeria, 60% of the victims were transported to hospitals by both relatives and bye-standers from the crash scene as against those transported by ambulances of the federal road safety commission and police.

A well structured pre-hospital trauma care is at present a challenge for most developing countries. However, training motivated citizens, such as young drivers, who are more likely to confront emergency situations to function as pre-hospital care providers would go a long way in improving the outcome of treatment of victims of road traffic crash.

Conflict of Interests

The author(s) have not declared any conflict of interests.

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