Medical workers urged to treat patients holistically

By Joseph Okoghenun

Experts have urged medical workers to treat their patients holistically.

The experts, who spoke in Lagos recently during a ‘Medical Work and the Person Workshop’ organized by Arthur Mbanele Digital Research Centre and Loving Gaze for medical workers, said health workers will only get the best out of their patients when they treat them with dignity.

Holistic treatment in medicine is often characterised by the treatment of the whole person, taking into account the patient’s mental and social background, rather than just the physical symptoms of a disease.

In Nigeria, there have been numerous complaints by patients that medical workers, including doctors and nurses, often fail to take into consideration their mental and social background while attending to them, a situation that has contributed to Nigeria’s haphazard medical outcomes.

But various speakers at the two-day workshop which focused on the uniqueness of each patient, said medical workers should see each patient as people beyond the diseases they are presenting in the hospital. The speakers added that recognising each patient as a person with his own desires, fears and realities, would allow medical workers to approach the patient holistically with the needed care, acceptance and understanding.

St Kizito Clinic Medical Director, Dr Alda Gemmmani said haphazard approach consultation with and care for patients should be discouraged, adding medical workers should develop human relations capacity to relate with their patients efficiently.

Gemmmani also urged medical workers to take into cognisance the situation the patient may be going through as well as the environment and family the patient may be coming from.

The workshop also kick-started cooperation between Mbanele Digital Research Centre and Loving Gaze, an independent non-profit organisation, with 25 years experience in education and primary health care service in Nigeria.

Loving Gaze General Manager, Ms Barbara Pepoli, said dignity and respect for human life is essential in efficient medical work. “Medical work, in fact, becomes important and valuable only when it gives dignity to human life,” Pepoli said.

Executive Director of Uganda-based Permanent Centre for Education, Mauro Glacomazzi, stated that love and affection are essential in the physical and emotional healing process for patients, adding that there is need for medical workers to respect feelings, needs and desires of their patients.

He explained that each patient may come to hospital with a unique identity, long-held traditions, beliefs, customs and norms, which a medical worker needs to appreciate to get the best result. Founder of Digital Research Centre and Nigeria’s former Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Chief Arthur Mbanele, said the centre would go a long way in assisting researchers in medical, technology and scientific fields.

“We have a digital library room with 20 desktops connected to the top medical and scientific libraries in United States,” he said.

The library is located at the heart of the University of Lagos (UNILAG), Lagos.