

REPORT ON THE SVOSH-IMSU-NIGERIA COMMUNITY OUTREACH HELD ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2022 AT OGBAKU, MBAITOLI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, IMO STATE, NIGERIA

Preamble

The Department of Optometry, Imo State University Owerri, Nigeria applied for enrolment into the Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity (VOSH) on September 9, 2021. Subsequently, on October 16, 2021, the Department attended the VOSH/International Annual Meeting where she was admitted into SVOSH with the name **SVOSH-IMSU-NIGERIA**. Shortly after the enrolment, the Department was announced the SVOSH Chapter of the month of November on November 12, 2021.

In January, 2022, SVOSH-IMSU-NIGERIA applied for the Community Outreach Grant of \$1,500 and received same in February, 2022 to execute a community outreach program scheduled in Ogbaku, Mbitoli Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria.

Team recruitment

Three lecturers, 1 clinical instructor and 36 clinical students were engaged for the outreach. Although the clinical students have sufficient mastery of clinical knowledge and skills to render quality services to patients, they worked under the supervision of the lecturers and clinical instructor.

Community participation/involvement

Prior to the outreach, several advocacy visits were made to the traditional rulers of the three villages that make up the community. The advocacies were to explain the objectives, logistics, procedures, modules and possible outcomes of the outreach to the community leaders. The services of a local guide (Town Crier) were engaged for proper dissemination of information, sensitization and motivation of community members before the arrival of the SVOSH team.

Arrival and Engagement

The SVOSH team arrived at the community by 10.30am of Saturday, February 12, 2022 to meet a highly sensitized, motivated and enthusiastic community. Shortly after arrival and attending to preliminary protocols and formalities, the team proceeded to set up various test stations of the outreach. On the overall, 11 stations were mounted viz: Temperature check, Registration, case history, blood pressure check, blood sugar check, visual acuity (VA), external examination, ophthalmoscopy, refraction, tonometry and dispensary/optics. Each station was overseen by, at least, 3 clinicians who provided station-specific services to the patients and directed them to the next station appropriate to their needs. The team complied with COVID-19 protocols; distributing nose masks to the patients and insisting on their use. It also ensured that all attending patients signed the waiver/ethical consent forms, thereby granting SVOSH-IMSU-NIGERIA the right to provide treatment, take and publish the data and videos/pictures of participants without legal consequences. On the overall, close to 500 patients were examined, treated, counselled and referred as the case may be. However, close to 200 forms were retrieved from the patients because many patients mistakenly went home with their forms.

Observations

The community outreach was the first of its kind in the community. The Chairman of the community and his executives were very elated and appreciative of VOSH/International for sponsoring and funding the program which they described as epochal.

The SVOSH team saw interesting cases of refractive error, presbyopia, glaucoma, cataract, corneal foreign body, corneal opacity, retinopathy, maculopathy and high blood pressure-related visual anomalies among others. It was very educative for SVOSH clinicians who had the opportunity to attend to and learn from novel cases.

Challenges

Certain procedures could not be performed due to unavailability of appropriate equipment. Such cases were referred to facilities which we consider expensive and very far from the community members.

Conclusion

The community outreach was very historical and successful. It was beneficial to the community and the clinicians whose clinical and knowledge bases were enriched. The organisation and execution of the program were academic, professional, seamless and complied with international best practices.

Recommendations

The Department requires more equipment for clinical and field interventions. Furthermore, the data derived from the outreach to be analysed and published in a reputable international journal, to enlighten the global community on the situation of eye health issues in rural Nigeria.

Acknowledgement

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