

Medical Law: Exploring Doctors' Knowledge on the Laws Regulating Clinical and Medical Laboratories in Nigeria.
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BACKGROUND

The Nigerian medical law is the embodiment of laws concerning the rights and responsibilities of medical professionals and their patients. It focuses on confidentiality, negligence, medical malpractice, ethics and criminal law.^{1,2} All medical professions (both core medical professions and allied health professions) in Nigeria are established by the Acts of parliament.³ Examples of such Acts are: Community Health Practitioners Act, Dangerous Drug Act, Medical Rehabilitation Act, Medical Laboratory Science Council of Nigerian (MLSCN) Act, Medical and Dental Practitioners Act (MPA), Nursing and Midwifery Act, Pharmacist Council of Nigerian Act and Radiographers Act. For the purpose of this research our focus would be limited to MLSCN and MP Acts.

The Acts of law in Nigeria is enshrined in her constitution which is a binding force on the authorities and people throughout the country to ensure peace, order and good operational governance.⁴ It gives an institution or profession a legal right to be established and operate in Nigeria.³ The Acts also serve as guidelines for the job roles of every profession, institution and establishment to prevent inter-professional conflicts.⁵

According to MLSCN Act, the laboratory where the Medical Laboratory Scientist carries out their specified analysis is known as Medical Laboratory. The Medical Laboratory is under the regulation of the Medical Laboratory Council of Nigeria. The job specification of the medical laboratory as clearly spelt out on section 29 of the MLSCN Act, is for production, sales, importation and storage of medical laboratory reagents and production of diagnostic devices.⁶

The Medical and Dental Practitioner Act identifies and defines the laboratory for diagnosis of diseases as Clinical laboratory. This means that the hospital laboratories where testing of patients' sample is carried out is the clinical laboratory. The laboratory physicians (pathologists) are responsible for all tests carried out in the clinical laboratory. The Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria has the sole responsibility for the regulation of the clinical laboratory.⁷

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study was a cross-sectional descriptive survey. A sample size calculated was 216 using the Leslie Kish formula.⁸

Table 1. Socio-demographics characteristics of participants

Variables		Frequency (n = 216)	Percentage (100%)
Age	21-30	27	12.5
	31-40	105	48.6
	41-50	71	32.9
	>50	13	6.0
Sex	Male	169	78.2
	Female	47	21.8
Years of practice	<1	15	6.9
	1 - 5	91	42.1
	6 - 10	69	31.9
	11 - 15	22	10.2
	16 - 20	13	6.1
	>20	6	2.8

Table 2. Awareness and Reading of MP Act vs MLSCN Act

Variables		Frequency (n = 216)	Percentage (100 %)
Aware of MP Act	Yes	164	75.9
	No	52	24.1
Read MP Act	Yes	56	25.9
	No	160	74.1
Awareness of MLSCN Act	Yes	98	45.4
	No	118	54.6
Read MLSCN Act	Yes	32	14.8
	No	184	85.2

Table 3. Knowledge of the job role of Medical laboratory Scientist vs Clinical laboratory Physician

Variables		Frequency (n = 216)	Percentage (100%)
MLS as a core medical profession	True	39	18.1
	False	128	59.3
	I don't know	49	22.7
MLS as a science profession	True	33	15.3
	False	156	72.2
	I don't know	27	12.5
Lab Science same job as Lab physician	True	179	82.9
	False	32	14.8
	I don't know	5	2.3
Medical Lab is for MLS	True	211	97.7
	False	0	0
	I don't know	5	2.3
Clinical Lab is for Lab Physicians	True	45	20.8
	False	139	64.4
	I don't know	32	14.8
Diagnostic Test in Med Lab	True	148	68.5
	False	68	31.5
Diagnostic Test in Clinical Lab	True	51	23.6
	False	165	76.4
Legal job specification for MLS	True	32	14.8
	False	143	66.2
	I don't know	41	19.0
Illegality of analysing samples in med lab	True	34	15.7
	False	147	68.1
	I don't know	35	16.2
Bench work in Clinical lab solely for Lab physicians	True	56	25.9
	False	141	65.3
	I don't know	19	8.8
Responsibility of the physician in clinical lab	True	138	63.9
	False	35	16.2
	I don't know	43	19.9

Table 4. Relationship between awareness of the MLSCN and MP Acts vs understanding the job roles of medical and clinical laboratories

Variables		Awareness of MLSCN Act		Awareness of MP Act		P-value
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
Lab Science as a core Medical profession	True	2	37	13	26	0.831
	False	83	45	116	12	
	I don't know	13	36	35	14	
Lab Science as a science profession	True	32	1	32	1	0.001*
	False	53	103	112	44	
	I don't know	13	14	20	7	
Lab Science same job as Lab physician	True	62	117	128	51	0.07
	False	32	0	32	0	
	I don't know	4	1	4	1	
Medical Lab for MLS	True	97	114	163	48	0.249
	False	0	0	0	0	
	I don't know	1	4	1	1	
Clinical Lab for Lab Physicians	True	37	8	45	0	0.000*
	False	54	85	100	39	
	I don't know	7	25	19	13	
Diagnostic Test in Med Lab	True	37	111	39	52	0.000*
	False	61	7	68	0	
Diagnostic Test in Clinical Lab	True	44	7	51	0	0.000*
	False	54	111	113	52	
Legal job specification for MLS	True	32	0	32	0	0.003*
	False	32	111	94	49	
	I don't know	34	7	38	3	
Illegality of analysing samples	True	34	0	34	0	0.000*
	False	36	111	95	52	
	I don't know	28	7	35	0	
Bench work in Clinical lab solely for Lab physicians	True	52	4	56	0	0.05*
	False	38	103	93	48	
	I don't know	8	11	15	4	

*significance

REFERENCE

1. Archibong F, Atangwho A , Ayuk AE, Okoye I E, Atrogor M, Okokon I B. Medical Law: Exploring Doctors' Knowledge on the Laws Regulating Clinical and Medical Laboratories in Nigeria. Niger Jmed 2019 : 386-392