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Qualitative study of knowledge and attitudes to bio banking among lay persons in Nigeria

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Background: Interest in biobanking for collection of specimens for non-communicable diseases research has grown in recent times. This paper explores the perspectives of Nigerians on donation of specimen for the biobanking research.

Methods: We conducted 16 Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with individuals from different ethnic, age and socio-economic groups in Kano (North), Enugu (Southeast), Oyo States (Southwest) and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (Central) of Nigeria. We used topic guides and prompt statements to explore the knowledge and understanding of interviewees to general issues about biobanking of biospecimens, their use and specifically about role of biobanking in non-communicable diseases research.

Results: A total of 123 individuals participated in 16 focus group discussions in 2011. Our participants had limited knowledge of the concept of biobanking but accepted it once they were educated about it and saw it as a worthwhile venture. Half of our study participants supported use of broad consent, a quarter supported restricted consent while the remaining quarter were in favour of tiered consent. Most discussants support shipment of their samples to other countries for further research, but they prefer those collaborations to be done only with competent, ethical researchers and they would like to receive feedback about such projects. The majority preferred health care as a benefit from participation, particularly for any unexpected condition that may be discovered during the course of the research instead of financial compensation. Participants emphasized the need to ensure that donated samples were not used for research that contradicts their religious beliefs.

Conclusions: Our study demonstrates that our participants accepted biobanking once they understand it but there were different attitudes to elements of biobanking such as type of consent. Our study highlights the need to carefully document population attitudes to elements of modern scientific research and the consenting process.

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