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Azwihangwisi Helen Mavhandu-Mudzusi

University of South Africa, South Africa

Community service nurses' experiences at Tshwane District Public Hospital, South Africa

Introduction & Aim: The South African Nursing Council requires every newly qualified professional nurse to perform remunerated community service in a public hospital for a period of one year. However, most newly qualified professional nurses request to be transferred to other hospitals before the end of their placement term. The study purpose was to gain the understanding of community service nurses experiences at Tshwane district Public Hospital in South Africa.

Methods: The study utilized interpretative phenomenological analysis design. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data from eleven purposively sampled community service nurses. Data were analyzed using Smith's interpretative phenomenological analysis framework for data analysis.

Results: Community service nurses were confronted with limited material resources, shortage of healthcare personnel, poor interpersonal relationships and lack of support during their placement at Tshwane district public hospital. These non-conducive clinical environments prevented community service nurses from acquiring required clinical experience and readiness to work independently as registered nurses. The experience led to frustrations and demotivation of community service nurses. Participants made suggestions for improving the community service nursing.

Conclusion: Results indicate lack of hospital readiness and preparedness to offer a conducive environment for community service nurses to gain required clinical experience. This has a negative impact on the nursing profession, nursing education and patient care. Recommendations were put forward focusing on nursing council responsibilities, mentorship and transformation of nursing curricular to be contextually relevant to the country's health care systems and resources.

Biography

Azwihangwisi Helen Mavhandu-Mudzusi is Full Professor at the University of South Africa. She is NRF C rated Researcher and the winner of 2017 Distinguished Women Scientist Award. She was an HIV/AIDS Coordinator at the University of Venda, where she trained students and educators in basic HIV/AIDS information. She also trained educators in Limpopo Province in basic HIV/AIDS counseling skills for orphans and vulnerable children and is deeply involved in rural community service work, which includes HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns at rural secondary schools, churches and orphanages. She is a Fellow of M.A.C. AIDS Fund Leadership initiative at Columbia University, the University of California and the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa. She holds several diplomas, advanced diplomas and degrees in nursing, including an Honors and Master's degree. She is deeply involved in the advocacy and support for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) students in rural institutions of higher learning.

mmudza@unisa.ac.za

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