Introduction

Despite rural to urban migration, 65.2% of the Namibian population, roughly two-thirds of 2.3 million people, live in remote regions of the country (Jauch, 2012; Booysen, 2003; Mchombu & Mnubi, 2011). Most poor Namibians (85%) are located in rural areas (Zere, Tumusilme, Walker, Krigia, Mwikisa & Mbeeli, 2010). Pharmaceutical and medical facilities are run by the Ministry of Health and Social Services, Namibia. Rural populations have been noted in communities served by policy makers by providing integrated, affordable, accessible, quality health and social welfare services that are responsive to the needs of the people (MoHSS, 2015).

Objectives

• Describe a community-based continuum professional development (CPD) programme focused on strengthening nursing leadership and community health in rural Namibia.
• Summarise the programme structure, educational content—knowledge, skills and attitudes—and experiential teaching-learning methods.
• Highlight outcomes of the program to date and the quality improvement process used to evaluate and implement ongoing changes for the programme.
• Discuss plans for future follow up and evaluation of population-based health outcomes in local communities.

Population Health in Namibia

In a recent address to the fifth World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, Dr. Bernard Haufler, Namibian Minister of Health and Social Services, cited the following health indicators:

- Significant reduction in HIV transmission.
- A 95% success rate in the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT).
- A 90% reduction in maternal mortality.
- A 94% reduction in child mortality.
- Significant drops in tuberculosis (TB) infections, but increases in multiple drug resistance to TB.
- A decrease in malaria.
- Maternal mortality of 409 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.
- Under-five mortality rate of 60 deaths per 1000 live births.
- Infant mortality rate of 46 deaths per 1000 live births.

Health Care Infrastructure

The mission of Namibia’s Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) is focused on improving health outcomes by providing integrative, affordable, accessible, quality health and social welfare services that are responsive to the needs of the people (MoHSS, 2015).

Principles of primary health care (PHC), as envisioned in the Alma-Ata Declaration, have been integrated into public health policies (WHO, 1978).

The public health care delivery system, serves over 80% of the population, and rural populations are almost totally dependent on the public health care system for biomedical care. Health districts and clinic services have been constructed in each of the 14 regional directorates in Namibia with the aim of reaching Namibians in all areas of the country.

Nurses are assigned to the remote clinics, while doctors are allocated strategically to district hospitals in small cities and towns.

Continuing Professional Development

Competent, ethical practice assumes ongoing lifelong learning. In 2010 the Namibian Parliament passed a law requiring that registered nurses and other health care professionals must earn 30 continuing education units (CEUs) annually to maintain their registration with the Health Professions Council of Namibia (HPCN, 2013). Fulling CPD requirements which is assigned to a remote rural clinic is difficult.

Community-Based Education & Practice Programme

A quality assurance response to nurses’ needs for relevant continuing professional development in rural communities aimed at:

- Strengthening knowledge, skills, and attitudes about transcultural nursing leadership, evidence based practice, and the application of public health principles.
- Equipping nurses to design and lead quality improvement initiatives in local contexts that will enhance health and quality of life for diverse rural populations.
- Promoting connecting nurses in rural regions to a network of support.
- Limiting rural to urban nurse migration and reducing nurse turnover in rural communities.
- Improving health outcomes and quality of life for rural populations.

Collaborative Partners

Augsburg College Department of Nursing, Minneapolis, USA

Health Care Systems and Services Institute, USA

Augsburg College

Health Professions and Social Services, Namibia

Health Professions and Social Services, Namibia


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Health Professions and Social Services, Namibia


Multiple partners, including governments, international organizations, and local communities, are involved in the programme as described in the programme content and educational objectives section.