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HOW NURSES CONTRIBUTE TO CLINICAL RESEARCH AND THE SUPPORT NEEDED TO ENABLE THEIR GREATER INVOLVEMENT IN CLINICAL RESEARCH

Nurses form a vital part of the health multidisciplinary team in health research. They carry out research independently and collectively in the clinical set up and it is recognised the world over that their place is indispensable. They therefore need to be knowledgeable on the research process, carry out research, disseminate research findings, embrace/develop innovations, mentor/train other researchers, participate in/influence health policy, protect research participants and researchers and become leaders in health research.

In 2012, I did a research to assess the ‘Adherence of the Health Care Practitioners to the Adolescent Reproductive Health and Development Policy at Garissa Provincial General Hospital, Kenya. One major finding in this research is that the health care practitioner policy adherence rate was 62.2% and the clientele satisfaction rate was about 34%. Most of the lacking aspects to facilitate the policy are within our country’s reach (though this area is hit by poverty, drug addiction, illiteracy, consanguineous marriages, infibulations, insecurity, and a conservative culture, among others).

These findings have been presented in two national and one international scientific conferences. The national conferences were for the Kenya Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society (February 2013) and the national nurses association of Kenya (October, 2013). The international conference was in our neighbouring country Uganda in their Uganda Paediatric Association annual scientific conference.

Through these research disseminations the Ugandan ministry of health, who are in the process of developing their policy on adolescent reproductive health, stated that the research findings would help their health sector in formulation of their policy.

Similarly, our Kenyan department of reproductive health in the ministry of health, and the Garissa Hospital management team (research site) has taken up the research recommendations to improve the care of the youth clientele who form 25% of our country population.
During the Ugandan conference I made links with researchers based at Makerere University (Uganda) and the University of Rwanda. I am seeking to publish the research findings in their health peer reviewed journals because our journal is not active right now. The Ugandan team has connected me to ‘the African health science journal, while the Rwandese researchers are yet to respond.

My hospital management has responded by requesting that we too do a similar research in our youth clinic to assess our adherence to the policy document (developed in 2003).

This year, we are formulating our hospital strategic plan for 2013-2017. This year we were rated ‘good’ in our implementation for the previous hospital strategic plan. Evidently as it was with our implementation of our strategic plan in our hospital and the adolescent policy at the Garissa hospital, we have good plans but implementation, monitoring and evaluation is poor. The research findings and previous hospital strategic plan evaluation evidence have formed a strong basis for decisions we are taking in our on going hospital strategic plan/future.

In our hospital (Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH)), we have about 1600 nurses with a patient bed capacity of 2500. From November 2013, I was appointed to take charge of nursing standards. Nursing standards unit includes research, continuous professional development, monitoring and evaluation and performance management.

Owing to the diversity and vastness of the hospital I formed a research team of 15 nurses to represent the different department namely prime care, medicine, orthopaedic/ear nose and throat, surgery, paediatrics, reproductive health, specialized units, accident and emergency and staff training centre.

This research team is been trained and mentored on research proposal writing, funding opportunities, manuscript writing and bioethics. They have discussed the standard operating procedures, procedure manuals and nursing code of ethics. They are able to identify research gaps, develop research proposals and drive nursing research.

This year I have done five research proposals as per the performance gaps identified and for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation (to be researched in 2013/2014). Their tittles include
adherence of health care practitioners to the adolescent reproductive health and development policy, factors that influence participation in research among nurses, the impact of decentralisation (devolvement), impact of free maternity services, and effects of shift work among the nurses at (KNH).

We have created also an annual scientific conference for research dissemination. We plan to have departmental research dissemination forums (we started at the accident and emergency department in July 2013). We are however facing a myriad of challenges in nursing research.

In KNH (June, 2013) a nursing research on nurses indicated lack of knowledge, motivation and research of research time as negatively affecting nurses’ involvement in research. Failure to disseminate research findings, lack of institutional support and resources (funds) were indicated as inhibiting nurses’ involvement in research and/or utilization of research findings in practice. Majority of nurses based their evidence for practice on knowledge gained from college while some benefited from continuous professional development sessions. We can intervene to overcome/minimise these challenges/obstacles in various ways.

Training nurses on the research process and mentorship needs to be stepped up to eliminate/minimise lack of knowledge on research issues. Computer literacy and computerisation is required in the developing world. There is need to mentor nurses on how to extract useful literature and form a habit of studying regularly, forming linkages with nurses, attending scientific conferences/seminars to keep abreast. Research education need to be included in the curricular in every health training institution.

Opportunities for research finding dissemination need to be advertised openly in good time to allow preparations without compromise on quality. Manuscript writing and the process of doing publication is vital.

Institutional support and updates on institutions/research funding organisations to the nurse researchers is important. For research to grow from its infancy in our country and be at the par with the world health trends (we do not exist in a vacuum), we need to allocate time for research and recognise/reward nurses who produce good researches and research based innovations.