

Nurses Sharing their Experiences through Publications

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Introduction

As a nurse author, research Award recipient and the Chairperson of Education and Research subcommittee of Nursing Now Campaign at the Ministry of Health, Lusaka, I feel delighted to write this article on Nurses as Authors. It has been noted that nurses face myriads of problems that impede them from writing books, publishing and conducting research studies.

Importance of writing books

The nurses are known to put the health of the health care recipients as paramount. They also provide information, education and communication on various health topics that affect their health especially on accessing health services through availability of Health Insurance Schemes that our Ministry of Health has put in place. I write this article based on my experiences. Please check out these book publications that are also available at Amazon.com. 2011: Chanda D.O. (2011). Nursing Management of Cholera Patients in Zambia. ISBN 978-9982-03-063-2. University of Zambia Press, Lusaka. 2004: Chanda D. O. (2004), Infection Prevention Manual for Developing Countries: ISBN 9982-12-001-8, (pp-271). Maiden Publishing House, Lusaka, Zambia. An article on national Health Insurance Scheme will soon be uploaded on our Website (www.zamcha.org). ZAMCHA stands for Zambia Movement for community Health Action.

When we talk about nurses as authors, we are actually talking about preserving nurses knowledge through documentation of their experiences in their various disciplines. These disciplines include Medical, Surgical, Oncology, Low Risk and High, Risk Midwifery Public/Community Health Nursing, Neonatal Nursing, Critical Care and Emergency Nursing. Nurses access these published articles, books that they can use as text books and reference materials to update their knowledge on theoretical, clinical and practical nursing. Writing is a way of documenting and sharing one's experiences for the benefit of the health care recipients. Authoring also depicts leadership qualities in nursing as the nurse-authors take leadership in sharing their experiences. This leadership quality has been demonstrated by our counterparts in high income countries.

Process of authoring

Nurses in low income countries are being encouraged to write down or document their experiences during Ward and Grand rounds. This entails each nurse to carry their booklets and seek clarifications during these rounds. These documentations precede the writing of the books which usually takes a very long time to complete. Nurses authoring consist of conducting research, publishing their research findings, writing Case Histories and writing books on health problems that are relevant in their environments. There is need to applaud our fellow nurses in Europe, the USA, and India who write on health issues that relate to their health environment. As nurses, we need to develop a culture of writing despite the myriads of socio-economic issues that stand in our way. The principles of Nursing encourage us to document our patient care activities in our booklets and Ward Kardex. In Nursing, what is not documented can be assumed as not having been done. The Nursing Now Campaign should focus on encouraging Nurses to be authoring books and conducting research in their

specialty areas. Nurses authoring books could emanate from us documenting our daily experiences in the various clinical areas. These documentations could be on the medications relating to medical diagnosis, nursing care plans that comprise of history taking, physical examinations, nursing diagnosis, objectives, implementation and evaluation of our nursing care plans. Authoring books can also focus on our life's experiences as nurses or even on Novels for artistically-creative nurses.

Why few nurse - Authors in low income countries

The main reasons could be due to work overload which makes the nurses to be too tired to create protected time for writing. Also, there is no funding, encouragement or demand for authorship from the health care managers. Authorship does not appear on our appraisal system for promotions to higher positions. Also the few nurse authors are not encouraged to share their experiences with the nursing workforce. Another reason for few nurse authors is because of publishing fees which are very high in high impact journals. Health institutions can establish publishing funds to support nurse-authors in publications.

Increasing nurse-authors

Nursing education

Nursing education should include writing skills in the various curricula. 'this will encourage them to edit their write-ups for both grammatical and typographic errors. This will enhance students' observation of principles of academic writing.

Nursing research

Nurses can form research groups and come up with relevant topics that can answer the questions of the day. It is also worth considering the setting up of a team of Research lecturers to conduct lectures on Research process just to build up capacities on how to conduct research. This will motivate the would-be nurse-authors. Even more motivating will be the creation of Nurse-Research supervisors or where not possible, the Managers can collaborate with the academic institutions to provide supervisors for the nurse-researchers.

Health managers

It will be very encouraging for health care managers to include publications within the appraisal system so nurse-authors can be promoted for their publications as well as setting up Research Funds for would be nurse-authors. The health managers should also create Awards for deserving nurse-authors who have excelled in Research Publications.

Conclusion

Health Care institutions are expected to encourage nurse-authors to be writing and publishing their articles as nurses nurse their patients twenty-four hours per day. So, they are in the best position to author health care materials for the benefit of the population at large.

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