



Public Health Nursing in the Americas: Recent Developments

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Abstract

Many countries in the Americas lack current, systematized data on the workforce profile of public health nurses and the public health nursing profession as a whole. A growing number of nurses are pursuing training in public health at the master's and doctoral levels due to significant regional differences in the levels and types of training they receive. Many nurses are not considered to be public health nurses even though they perform some or all of the essential functions of public health. By and large, helper and specialized medical caretakers have a more extensive presence in general wellbeing regions than proficient medical attendants. Regional health system reforms should support greater roles in individual, community, and population-level public health research and health care, as well as increased recruitment and training of public health nurses.

Keywords: Public health nursing, Nursing, Public health, The Americas, Latin America, Essential functions of public health

INTRODUCTION

Because it focuses on the relationship between population health and the environment—which includes physical, biological, and socio-cultural factors—in order to meet public health needs, public health nursing is a specialized field within the nursing profession (Grumbach K, 2004). This is because practitioners focus on the relationship between population health and the environment—which includes physical, biological, and socio-cultural factors—in order to meet public health needs. In addition to providing direct patient care, public health nurses are responsible for community and population health promotion and disease prevention activities that necessitate a multidisciplinary approach involving nursing, public health, and social sciences (Levin PF, 2008). Public health nurses provide a wide range of services to patients and the community, including education and epidemiological research, and they work in a variety of settings with a variety of health actors. It is difficult to find systematic information about the public health nursing workforce in the Americas, despite

the field's long history and efforts to define its scope and practice. The largest group of professionals in the field of public health are public health nurses, who play important roles in promoting public health throughout the Americas (Abrams SE, 2004). The number, job descriptions, and duties of these health care professionals vary significantly. In addition, there are significant variations in the types, levels, and types of education and training that public health nurses receive. The fact that many nurses carry out some or all of the essential functions of public health but are not considered to be public health nurses or are unfamiliar with the field of public health complicates regional differences in characterizations of public health nursing (Swearingen CD, 2008). It is essential to note that there is a shortage of healthcare professionals, particularly nurses, throughout the Americas. According to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), 15 nations in the Americas do not meet the baseline of 25 health workers per 10,000 people, highlighting the severe shortage of nurses required to maintain population health. Even though the PAHO said in 2001 that more research was needed to figure

out how many and what kind of public health nurses work there, many countries in the Americas still don't have any information or it's hard to find. In primary care settings, there are a significant number of assistants and auxiliary nurses who are responsible for direct patient contact, according to available nursing data. Nurses with advanced degrees and/or training for administrative or research positions are few and far between. Many nurses perform the same duties as nurses with less training, despite the fact that some have higher levels of education.

METHODS

In order to comprehend the state of public health nursing in Mexico, Colombia, and Paraguay, interviews were conducted with nurses who have held leadership positions in public health activities to supplement the information gleaned from the literature review. This study needs information from the selected nations because each nation is experiencing significant shifts in the nursing profession, such as a resurgence of interest in community-based nursing and increased recognition of nurses as health professionals (Terris M, 1992). The interviews focused on the current workforce's profile, while the literature review focused on information about the field of public health nursing. Interviews and a literature review were carried out separately. In the literature review, the primary question was: In the regional literature, is public health nursing a recognized and defined concept or field? Through a series of steps, this general question was narrowed down to identify key words related to education level, job responsibilities, and professional roles (Malvárez SM, 2006). The strategy for the literature review then made use of these keywords. Information regarding the total number of public health and nursing personnel was gathered using materials published by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Population Fund due to the lack of information regarding the number of public health nursing personnel in the Americas (Gofin J, 2007).

Concepts of public health

Over the course of its development, the term "public health" has come to refer to a collection of social practices and values aimed at enhancing population health. The idea of public health originated in the field of hygiene and is based on the idea that specific measures can be taken to prevent infectious or pathogenic agents from spreading. The emergence of a new disease profile that consists of chronic, non-infectious, and degenerative health issues has modernized the concept of public health around the world. In contrast to direct patient care, which typically refers to a clinical focus, the current concept of public health emphasizes the health requirements of populations rather than individuals. Experts in public health concentrate on various specific aspects of the idea. Terris's emphasizes community involvement in his definition of public health but does not explicitly include government involvement

(Gaviria-Noreña DL, 2000). In contrast, Frank asserts that social welfare, which includes improving health conditions, should be the responsibility of society and government institutions. Through health promotion, disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment, and rehabilitation, PAHO also takes into account the role of governmental institutions in improving populations' health.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the low position of public health as a priority area of health system performance, public health nurses have been increasing in number and recognition across the Americas over the past 20 years. When compared to other groups of health professionals like doctors and dentists, the majority of nurses in Latin America have low-level qualifications (Torres-Epperson JM, 2009). The findings of this study indicate that there have not been sufficient efforts made to provide the necessary personnel for public health activities in many countries in the Americas. National health system reforms, which currently tend to focus on strengthening primary care and public health interventions, are frequently aligned with the definitions of competencies and responsibilities for public health nurses. Technical and auxiliary nurses typically work in public health, while specialist and university-trained nurses provide clinical care in hospitals. According to the results of the bibliographic search, there aren't many regional journals that publish articles on public health nursing topics. Just seven diaries were recognized in Canada, the U.S., Mexico, Colombia, Cuba, and Paraguay (Falk-Rafael A, 2005). Over half of the literature reviewed was written by academic researchers, while the remainder was written by international consultants and government officials. This suggests that a wide range of stakeholders have shown interest in the field of public health nursing despite the lack of information.

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