

20TH WORLD NURSING EDUCATION CONFERENCE

May 22- 24, 2017 Osaka, Japan

Community health nurses' role, work contents, and nurses' learning needs assessment in Southwest China

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Background: The costs of curing chronic diseases has been present growth trend. And improving the health promotion and healthcare management may have achieved significant results in terms of population health maintenance. How to make the community health nurses' role full play and establish a comprehensive education development plan had been the concern of the Chinese government.

Objective: The purpose of this study was to investigate community health nurses' role, work contents, and explore the reasonable teaching methods by knowing nurses' learning needs.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional design using self-answered questionnaires comprising demographic questions and three scales measuring actual role, work content and teaching Needs scale was used.

Results: 1,015 community health nurses in 56 CHS centers were cluster sampled. Findings showed that the community nurses mainly undertook the roles of health educator (94.0%), health caregiver (84.9%), collaborator and coordinator (78.5%), observer (73.9%), manager and organizer (52.3%), but seldom undertook advocate role (48.4%), leadership role (27.7%) and research role (32.3%). And there were five most important work contents: health education (84.4%), providing care for patient directly (71.4%), community-based prevention (70.1%), chronic disease management (69.6%) and elderly healthcare (66.5%). This presents a problem for community nursing education: lacking of related ability such as advocating for residents, leadership skills and scientific research skills are perceived as the greatest need. Nurses preceptors also need to improve teaching related to maternal healthcare, child healthcare, mental rehabilitation, family health nursing and hospice care.

Conclusions: For community health nurses in China to function perfect, "make best use of interactive teaching methodologies" and "encourage nurses in community based research projects" help a lot to improve individual quality and ability. Meanwhile, "Encourage nurses in family health survey and learn to do community diagnosis" contribute to take good care of vulnerable groups.

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