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Self-perceived challenges of lay counselors implementing voluntary counseling and testing in Mopani district, Limpopo province, South Africa

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The demand for counseling and testing for Human Immune Virus (HIV) services is increasing in South Africa. HIV counseling and testing has been recognized as an important component of HIV and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) care and support and is an essential part of HIV testing. The purpose of the study was to identify the challenges faced by lay counselors in implementing VCT in the health facilities of Mopani district Limpopo province, South Africa. Qualitative research design was used to collect the data. The population consisted of 60 lay counselors who were implementing VCT in the Greater-Tzaneen, Greater Letaba and Ba-Phalaborwa municipalities. Data was collected through semi-structured interview guide for focus group discussions. Data was analyzed qualitatively through the open coding. The results revealed that lay counselors experienced challenges when implementing the VCT program; namely, that they lacked counseling skills. The lay counselors also experienced some challenges with their clients such as denial of their HIV positive status as well as challenges with the environment and the attitude of health professionals. Counseling aspects such as explaining the counseling process, the issue of pre-testing and post-testing, the importance of consent forms and how tests are conducted, are important processes that counselors should effectively use for successful counseling sessions. The execution of these skills should be improved before lay counselors can be regarded as competent. On the basis of the results there is a need to develop strategies to enhance the competence of the lay counselors.

Biography

Mankuba Jacobeth Ramalepe has completed her PhD in 2014 from the University of Venda Limpopo province, South Africa. She is the Director of a Non-profit Organization called Community Responsiveness Programs (CRP). She has initiated the organization CRP in 1998. CRP coordinates and facilitates training of lay health and social development workers and the organization also provides care and support of orphans and vulnerable children. She serves in boards of child care initiatives. She has published 4 papers in reputed journals locally and internationally.

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