

2ND ADVANCED NURSING SCIENCE & PRACTICE

April 20-21, 2018 | Las Vegas, USA

Support of professional nurses caring for HIV/AIDS patients in Tshwane district hospitals of Gauteng province, South Africa

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Statement of the Problem: Professional nurses working in one of the hospitals in Tshwane district of Gauteng Province, South Africa expressed concerns about the poor quality and unavailability of gloves, aprons, masks, which increased the risk of accidental exposure to HIV. Fear of occupational exposure had serious professional ramifications, such as avoidance or refusal to care for patients, personal consequences from partners urging caregivers to quit their jobs to avoid infection of themselves and their children.

Purpose: Purpose of the study was to explore and describe support of the professional nurses.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: A qualitative approach with explorative, descriptive and contextual designs was employed. Purposive sampling method was used to select 25 participants who participated in the individual face to face interviews. Data gathered from the participants were analyzed using Tesch's eight step criteria of open coding techniques.

Findings: Low work morale was generally identified by the researcher as one of the sources of difficulty within their work environment. This was related to issues of limited resources and, most notably, participants explained that support rendered was ineffective in reducing the caregiving burden.

Conclusion & Significance: Relationship between work overload and other resulting consequences such as burnout, poor job satisfaction and low employee turnover rates were all seen as negative factors impacting on standards of nursing care. Professional nurses' who were providing HIV/AIDS care were not valued and unit nurse managers provided ineffective and psychological support. It is hoped that the study findings redirected changes about the needs of professional nurses caring for patients living HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). The research findings could add to the existing body of knowledge on challenges experienced and support needed by nurses who care for PLWHA.

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