Abstract

In the recent past, it has been reported that nurses working in nursing homes are experiencing a wide range of problems as well as challenges as far as their professional development is concerned because they lack the prerequisite skills necessary for the provision of appropriate care standards for residents. It is feared that with the majority of the nursing workforce aging fast, there shall be shortage of nurses working in nursing homes going forward. As at the moment, nursing homes seem to be largely dependent on nurses who happen to be recruited internationally.

Introduction

This study seeks to identify, assess as well as analyze the educational needs of nurses working in my current workplace which is a nursing home. The study also goes ahead to identify the priority educational needs that need to be addressed and the eminent challenges my current workplace faces as far as professional development of nurses is concerned.

Method

This study took into consideration the views of fifty (30) nurses at my place of employment against a total population of seventy five (75) nurses. The sample size was appropriate for convenience and those selected were given questionnaires to complete. The questionnaires had both open as well as closed questions which sought to find out their educational needs, access to education as well as funding if any. The respondents were all female. According to
Cherry et al. (2005), below 5% of home care nurses are male.

Discussion

At my current workplace, the need for nurses to access a wide range of educational levels has been a debatable issue for the last one decade. While the organization feels held back by budget constraints as far as funding nursing continuing education is concerned, the existing need for education cannot be overstated. Areas of high priority at my workplace as far as educational needs of nurses are concerned include specialist training undertakings in areas including but not in any way limited to palliative care as well as rehabilitation, continence promotion and last but not least tissue viability. These high priority educational needs can be pursued as either a degree course or diploma component but it is also important to note that there exists a number of short update courses on the same. It is also good to note that at my workplace, there exists great need for short update courses for nurses on theory as well as practice which may come in handy as far as the care people under them is concerned. There is also a persistent shortage of specialist advice as far as nursing problems which seem to be complex are concerned.

There are however institutional forces which may continue frustrating the addressing educational needs for home care nurses if nothing is done. As at the moment, my current place of employment does not receive any kind of government funding for further education of its staff. This essentially means that if it is to fund the education of its nurses, then the resulting costs must be shouldered by the residents. Ellershaw et al. (2003) notes that the inability of the government to fund the education of nursing home staff is unacceptable. He notes that if this is allowed to go on, then only the best homes shall be able to fund the education of their staff as those that cannot fund the same opt to settle for the mandatory standards and reject any professional development of their nurses beyond that. Based on the existing structure of the organization I work for, a number of steps need to be taken to address the educational needs of nurses as identified earlier in the text and which include but are not limited to palliative care as well as rehabilitation, continence promotion and last but not least tissue viability. To begin with, the organization can start by providing ongoing educational as well as clinical support using consultant nurses to its entire home care staff as well as nurses.
The consultant nurses can then be assisted by community matrons as well as other nurses who possess specialist knowledge in a wide variety of areas. In my own opinion, this could be a wise use of scarce resources and can hence be relied upon to cut down on hospital admissions which are avoidable and in the long-term enhance the quality of life for individuals who are older. According to Cherry et al. (2005), if good quality care is to be guaranteed in home care facilities, then the professional development of nurses as well as other members of staff should be a top priority. It is also important to note that the role of the government as far as funding of educational needs of nursing homes is concerned cannot be overstated. According to Fitzpatrick et al. (2004), government funding of the educational development is critical and in addition to being ring fenced, it should be structured in such a way that the budget holder accounts for every penny used.

According to Ellershaw et al. (2003), it is feared that there is soon going to be a shortage of nurses working in homecare once the current nursing workforce aged over 50 calls it a day and retires. However, what is of special concern here is that this demographic pressure shall hit nursing homes way before they hit NHS. It has also increasingly come to be seen as if a majority of nursing homes are heavily dependent on nurses recruited internationally. This includes my current place of employment. However, recent changes seem to have an effect of bringing down the international recruitment of nurses with most of those sourced from overseas required to complete a nursing program as well as an English proficiency test before settling for work. Davies (1999) also notes that the issues of nurses as far as home care is concerned do not end there. He notes that as overseas nurse recruitment nosedives, registered nurses who are quite experienced in areas such as acute and primary care trusts may also soon become redundant as a result of pressures brought about by costs.

Conclusion

It should be noted that the study I carried out at my place of employment with regard to the educational needs of nurses is small and with that in mind, more extensive research should be carried out in the same area. Such a study could concern itself with the various skills necessary for the home care nurses to carry out their duties and the distribution of such skills in the home care nursing marketplace. This study also indicates that due to the significant change in the substance of nursing home work, there is a great need for nurses to have greater expertise that before so as to offer competent services to nursing home residents.
References


