

Pacific Heads of Nursing & Midwifery Meeting

Réunion des chefs des soins infirmiers et obstétricaux du Pacifique

REGIONAL NURSING ACTIVITIES AND UPDATES

SUMMARY

The inaugural Pacific Heads of Nursing & Midwifery (PHoNM) meeting was convened in 2020 at Nadi, Fiji on 11th -14th February and highlighted the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife. The outcome of the four-day meeting resulted in 25 nursing recommendations of which priority areas included Human Resources, Nursing Education and Research, Nursing into the Future, Primary Health Care (PHC) and Universal Health Coverage (UHC), and Health Emergency. The Pacific Community (SPC) has coordinated and worked with countries to address these needs, advocate for nursing education, whilst strengthening capacity building within the workforce.

The recruitment of a Nursing Adviser, to provide technical and policy advice, and oversight whilst supporting nursing services in the region has been the mandate of the Clinical Services Program (CSP) within the Public Health Division (PHD) of SPC. This paper intends to update member countries with nursing- related activities which the organisation has undertaken to facilitate and strengthen nursing development in the region.

1. BACKGROUND

SPC is the principal scientific and technical organisation in the Pacific region, proudly supporting development since 1947. It is an international development organisation owned and governed by 26 PICTs. The CSP is one of three programmes in the PHD (one of ten divisions of SPC). Recognising that stronger regional oversight is the key to better management of regional aspects of country health systems, the PHD plays a key role, through its regional governance of hosting the Directors of Clinical Services (DCS) and the PHoNM as Secretariat with a helpdesk function, in supporting PICTs to cooperate regionally, to improve regional governance for clinical and nursing services strengthening, coordination and collaboration that enables scarce resources to be more effectively utilised. To this end, SPC also plays a key role in strengthening networks of clinical and nursing professionals and institutions, and improving the production and exchange of current and relevant information between clinical and nursing health stakeholders¹.

2. PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

2.1 Clinical Governance: SPC hosted the inaugural PHoNM meeting in February 2020 and identified Human Resources, Nursing Education and Research, and PHC and UHC, as some of its key priorities through strengthening of nursing leadership programmes, recognising and supporting continuous professional development (CPD) and where appropriate nursing specialisation in PICTs. SPC has provided support for these recommendations in the areas of Nursing education, support of workforce – perioperative nursing, critical care nursing, emergency medicine nursing and leadership management.

2021: Recruitment of PHD nursing adviser, to provide technical and policy advice, and oversight whilst supporting nursing services in the region. CSP and partners provided support for Nursing Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Intensive/Critical Care, Infection Prevention & Control, discipline specific nursing specialisation.

2.2 Strengthen PICTs networks and capacity to mobilise resources: CSP hosts a Regional Help Desk function to assist PICTs with their Clinical, Nursing & Biomedical requests. Majority of requests were from Development Partners, followed by PICT's, Specialist Colleges/Associations and Institutions. The areas supported included Anaesthesia, Biomedical, Critical care Nursing, ENT², Emergency Care Nursing, Infection Prevention & Control (IPC), Perioperative Nursing, and Radiology.

¹ PHD Business Plan 2019-2020

² Ear, Nose and Throat

2021: Total of 172 requests to date. Type of requests were on information sharing (38%), enquiry (16%), technical advice (15%), meetings (10%), resourcing (9%), training (7%) and advertising (4%). 21% (35) of linkages resulted in resource mobilisation.

PICTs requests were mainly for information sharing, enquiry, resourcing and technical advice (in that order). At least 92% of country requests were responded to within 3 days.

2.3: Improve regional collaborations on more cost-effective regional approaches that capitalise on economies of scale: SPC explores, develops, and implements cost effective sub-regional & regional initiatives in nursing services. SPC and RACS continues to collaborate in Perioperative Nursing training support to Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (FSM), Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu & Vanuatu. Through the Australian College of Nursing (ACN), SPC has supported training in critical care nursing. Additionally, is the support to peer-to-peer education and mentoring through the USAID funded ventilator programme to Fiji, Kiribati, and Nauru.

2021: In mid-2020, 114 Nurses (funded by DFAT) from 17 PICT's undertook the Australian Medcast facilitated SURGE³ Critical Care online short course (three months duration). The completion rate was 74% (84 of these nurses completed the course). This short-term strategy was invaluable and followed through by long term formal education as a means to furnish and upskill critical care facilities that were receiving ventilators and to adequately manage COVID-19 and critically ill patients in the PICTs.

32 nurses enrolled in the Graduate Certificate of Critical Care Nursing (GCCCCN) at the ACN. Support from RACS have ensured access to ProQuest (e-book database) for these 32 nurses. Eight nurses (25%) from the first cohort of 32 GCCCCN PICTs nurses in 2020, have completed their training. 22 nurses have enrolled into the 2021 GCCCCN cohort.

36 nurses have enrolled into the Graduate Certificate in Perioperative Nursing (GCPN) of which 11 are supported by SPC and 25 by RACS. At least 190 HCW⁴s, majority nurses, were trained in critical care management of a COVID-19 and critically ill patient, and use of the ZOLL ventilator through the USAID funded ventilator programme to Fiji, Kiribati and Nauru.

The Standards for Perioperative Nursing in PICTs (SPNP) manual is in its final stages of editing and will be available in hard copy and electronically for member countries. The development of the manual is a collaboration between SPC and RACS, initially titled as the Pacific perioperative practice bundle (PPPB), and funded through DFAT. This funding facilitated several consultations with PICTs nurses

³ Specialised Upskilling and RN Growth through Education in Critical Care

⁴ Healthcare workers

and stakeholders through a combination of in-country workshops and virtual meetings. This invaluable involvement has greatly contributed to the quality of the standards.

The development of the Online Module of the SPNP is a RACS funded initiative in collaboration with SPC and Interplast. The latter has been engaged to develop the online module using the Praxhub platform. Invitations were sent out to PICTs nurses to be members of the Reference Group to review the online module and this activity is ongoing.

With the COVID-19 funding support from partners, the CSP procured 8 Hamilton Transport ventilators, ventilators, mannequins for critical care training, oxygen concentrators and accessories, monitors, capnography monitors, laryngoscopes, pulse oximeters and critical care equipment and resources to PICTs. Mannequins were procured for 10 PICTs and user training is ongoing.

2.4: Improve evidence-based planning & decision making by DCS and PHoNM: CSP in collaboration with other partners supports research and analytical work to support informed decision making by DCS and PHoNM. A critical care follow up capacity survey was conducted in June-July 2021 as an adjunct to the 2020 needs analysis critical care capacity survey. The aim was to

2021: Preliminary findings of the 2021 Critical Care Survey indicated the concerns raised by ICU specialists, anaesthetists and nursing management, of the need for more skilled and trained HCWs in ICU/HDU⁵ facilities, more consumables and resources for ICU/HDU equipment, and space with better infrastructure. The 17 survey facilities in the 13 PICTs reported their main challenges as equipment and consumables, workforce shortage, lack of trained staff and biomedical capacity.

54% (7/13) of the survey countries provided a nurse: patient ratio of 1:2 in critical care support however this situation may vary should there be COVID-19 cases to manage. 23% (3/13) of the survey countries reported a nurse: patient ratio of more than 1:5 indicating the shortage and the need for upskilling and training of nurses in critical care.

2.5: Strengthen Pacific Clinical and Nursing Networks (PCNNs) capacity to identify, prioritise and address discipline-specific issue/challenges common to PICTs: CSP continues to support the PCNNs discipline-specific regional/sub-regional issues through continuing professional development and leadership development initiatives for Pacific nurses.

2021: 1 EM nursing manager undertaking Leadership and Management Course in Emergency Medicine (Alfred Health). 1 PGCCC nurse as part of mentoring and peer support with SPC Nursing

⁵ Intensive Care Unit/High Dependency Unit

Consultant to PICTs for critical care nursing trainings. Support to PIORNA⁶ membership and affiliation to ACORN⁷

3. CHALLENGES

- Lack of nurse specialisation and capacity in critical care
- Health technology and internet connectivity remain a challenge in accessing virtual trainings, meetings with PICTs.
 - Continuity to complete nursing online education programs remain a challenge due to internet connectivity, absence of training equipment (e.g. laptops etc), study time allocation
- Competing priorities in PICTs – COVID 19 & Vaccination.

4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

4.1 Recommendations for governments:

- Political will and leadership to advocate and support nursing priorities
- To continue support for nursing education and specialisation e.g. study time, study space
- Establish and/or strengthen career pathways for nursing specialisation e.g. critical care, emergency nursing, perioperative nursing

4.2 Recommendations for development partners:

- Ongoing support for nursing education and workforce needs
- Ongoing technical and funding support to nursing priority area needs at regional and national levels

⁶ Pacific Islands Operating Room Nursing Association

⁷ Australian College of Perioperative Nurses