

Pacific Heads of Nursing & Midwifery Meeting

Réunion des directeurs des soins infirmiers et obstétricaux du Pacifique

Emergency Nursing - Fiji Experience

Emergency Nursing is a speciality within the nursing profession. The role includes having the skillset to make lifesaving decisions, the ability to coordinate, think and function in chaotic situations and during emergency crisis and managing all these concurrently. An emergency nurse must have a broad fundamental knowledge of emergency care and proficient skills to effectively assess, triage and manage all patients that present to the emergency department.

Emergency care in any hospital has a health workforce that is mainly made up of nurses. Which means nurses need to be educated, upskilled and have the capacity to manage anyone that accesses these services in the emergency department.

Over the past two decades in Fiji, there has been an escalation of speciality training for clinicians, however for nursing, the only recognised speciality was Midwifery and Nurse Practitioners.

Needless to say, it has been a journey of challenges and successes to be part of the development of the postgraduate in emergency nursing program by the Fiji National University (FNU).

This paper will discuss that successful journey, which was built on sacrifice, knowing that emergency nursing is essential and that every patient, regardless of sex, race, colour, or status, must have access to emergency health care by providing safe and quality care.

1. BACKGROUND

My journey began when I completed the Master in Emergency Nursing program from the University of Sydney in 2020, funded by the Australian government. Upon my return, I was tasked to manage the busiest department at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva – the Emergency Department.

Like all other emergency departments, the greatest challenge and test of my leadership skills was during the COVID-19 outbreak in Fiji in 2021 whereby Fiji suffered and recorded the highest number of COVID-19 infections and deaths per capita in the world. The goal in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic was to pave the way to reduce workforce burnout and continue to deliver safe and quality care to the people of Fiji including continued workplace training and education.

2. PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

During this journey, the achievements were

- Being a key contributor to the curriculum development of the FNU Post Graduate Emergency Nursing program.
- Facilitating and successful delivery of the inaugural emergency nursing virtual symposium platform in 2021 to share the work of emergency nurses, contribution to education, training, community, regional engagement and service during the dark times of COVID-19 pandemic in 2021.
- Witnessing the first cohort graduates of the Post Graduate Diploma in Emergency Nursing spread out in Fiji's Western, Central and Northern Divisions.

And to witness the first batch of Masters in Emergency Nursing graduate at the end of 2022

3. CHALLENGES

3.1 Nursing

Post graduate emergency nursing education enhances recognition of the importance of the nursing role in contributing to Universal Health Coverage by providing safe and quality care to the people of Fiji. However, the main challenges have been due to lack of leadership support provided to students.

3.2 Leadership

Providing a supportive and trusted environment to strengthening patient safety by promoting and reporting clinical events amongst staff to learn from errors and make improvement to process and improve competency skills to prevent recurring errors. However, the quality improvement was

perceived as more workload added to the nursing management and staff. Information was indeed low, creating resistance and a disruptive workforce. However, with time and reassurance, the leader must create a supportive and trusted environment.

3.3 Transition to Management

A system of mentoring or inducting managers or leaders into the workforce is an institution's oversight. The idea and concept of promotion or uptaking a new role of Leadership should not be misunderstood. The institute should promote and encourage learning from experience as a building block to Leadership and create a professional identity of transformation for new leaders and managers (Plakhotnik, Rocco, & Roberts, 2011)¹. My overall experience in Leadership is survival to thrive and drive a workforce for clinical excellence.

4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- 1. Support Nursing leadership programs**
- Support Emergency Nursing education and **emergency nursing as speciality**.
- Support emergency nurses **Mentorship** programs
- Supportive, safe and trusted working environment

¹ Plakhotnik, M. S., Rocco, T. S., & Roberts, N. A. (2011). Increasing retention and success of first-time managers: A model of 3 intergral processes for the transition to management. *Human Resource Development Review*, 10(1), 26-45