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ENT Nursing Development in Samoa

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ENT nursing in Samoa is in its nascent stages, necessitating further training, recognition, and retention of specialist nurses to fortify the healthcare system. In 2023, the Samoa ENT clinic was attended by an average of 200 patient cases weekly, with 80% presenting complaints related to ear and hearing problems. Notably, approximately 50% of these cases were attributed to ear infections, and 40% involved children less than 10 years of age.

Significant progress continues to be made on ENT activities including delivery of Primary Ear and Hearing Care (PEHC) training sessions, school outreach ENT clinics, and increased research to inform evidence-based practice. Training and recognition, as well as retention of ENT nursing staff remain two ongoing challenges in Samoa that could be better addressed through improved recognition and support for ENT nursing, including educational and training opportunities, to further enhance the availability of specialized ENT care in the region.

1. BACKGROUND

According to WHO data, one in four people globally suffer from hearing loss, with an estimated 1 in 4 projected to have hearing problems by 2050, affecting 5.5% of the world's population. Of note, 34 million children experience deafness and hearing loss, with 60% of cases stemming from preventable causes. ENT nursing in Samoa is in its nascent stages, necessitating the training, recognition, and retention of specialist nurses to fortify the healthcare system. In comparison to other specialized fields, such as ophthalmology nursing, ENT nursing lags significantly. The way forward for Samoa lies in training nurses in ear and hearing care, with the WHO's Primary Ear and Hearing Care course offering a promising avenue. Encouraging nurses to train as audiometrists should be emphasized. The development of ENT specialist nurses in Samoa can also extend support to the Pacific region. Recognizing the importance of ENT nursing is vital to provide a better future for the region's children ear nose and throat health.

2. PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

2.1 Samoa ENT clinic

In 2023, the clinic was attended by an average of 200 patient cases weekly, with 80% presenting complaints related to ear and hearing problems. Notably, approximately 50% of these cases were attributed to ear infections, and 40% involved children less than 10 years of age. Ear pathology accounts for the majority of the workload in the clinic, yet half of the cases can be prevented to avoid children suffering from hearing impairments that affect their education, learning and future.

2.2 Primary ear and hearing care training

The team conducted four Primary Ear and Hearing Care (PEHC) training sessions for doctors, nurses, and health workers in March 2023, March 2022, November 2022, and March 2023. A total of 74 participants, comprising 12 doctors and 58 nurses from the main hospital, district hospitals, and the island of Savaii, underwent this training. The knowledge and skills from the training will avoid unnecessary transfer and cost for the patient. The simple removal of a foreign body, impacted wax

removal, aural toilet of the ears, and education of parents can be done in the primary care setting and whilst also referring the cases that need urgent care.

2.3 School ENT clinic outreach

Outreach efforts for school ENT clinics covered four primary schools, comprising two rural and two urban schools, where approximately 1,343 students were examined. During this visit, of these students, nearly half displayed ear pathologies. Among the findings, 37% had Chronic Suppurative Otitis Media (CSOM). In Britain, 0.9% of children and 0.5% of adult have CSOM, making Samoa's rates comparatively very high. In children, CSOM affects speech and language, as well as intellectual, psychological and social development, and education.

2.4 Research

Research and evidence based within clinical application assists in developing relevant and effective ENT services. In 2023, Registered Nurse Ferila Figao was instrumental initiating and completing research and encouraging of the involvement of ENT nurses, assisting in developing a useful and effective awareness program. One paper on this work was subsequently published in the [International Journal of Pediatric Otorhinolaryngology](#). In addition, another study has been completed that is currently under review for publication on the "knowledge and attitudes of the university nursing students to childhood hearing loss and hearing services in Samoa." The results from this research have given the evidence for the training of ENT specialists in Samoa with connection to the Nursing school at the National University of Samoa.

3. CHALLENGES

3.1 Retention of ENT Nurses

The retention of ENT nurses at present is a significant challenge. Since 2017, there were about 6 nurses who joined the department and 4 nurses who have left the service of the department, meaning approximately 66% of the staff migrated. Strategies are required to keep these skilled professionals on the field.

3.2 Training and Recognition

Training ENT specialist nurses and recognizing those currently engaged in ENT nursing is imperative. This recognition and specialization will bolster the field and address the shortage of skilled personnel.

4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

4.1 Recommendations for Governments

4.1.1 Government and Health Ministries should endorse and support the development of ENT nursing specialists in the Pacific, aligning with the Pacific Ear, Nose, and Throat Association Group's (PENTAG) strategic plan. Recognizing the importance of these specialists is essential for the region's healthcare.

4.2 Recommendation for Development Partners

4.2.1 Development partners should provide scholarships for nurses and facilitate postgraduate ENT nursing training for Pacific Island countries as supporting educational opportunities in this field will enhance the availability of specialized ENT care in the region.