

Report from FoAN visit to Malawi 2015

On the 16th March 17 perioperative nurses from across district and teaching hospitals in Malawi joined a theatre workshop in Lilongwe facilitated by Friends of African Nursing. Run over 4 ½ days the aim of the workshop was for the nurses to create a set of national standards for perioperative practice. The facilitators- Kate Woodhead (Chairman of FoAN), Diane Gilmour (Trustee FoAN) and Stephanie Freeman (FoAN facilitator) were supported by Angela Chiotcha (Infection Control Nurse/ Theatre nurse, Ministry of Health) and provided the delegates with an overview of the relevant perioperative practice before they then worked in groups to develop the associated standard. Group feedback and comments were then added and the standard agreed. The standards reflected a wide range of areas for the delivery of safe patient care in the perioperative environment (Infection prevention; health and safety; documentation; education) and in all 23 standards were written including:-

Swab and Instrument Count

Checking the patient into theatre

The role of the surgical team

Incident reporting

Patient positioning

The WHO surgical safety checklist was also discussed as a method of providing safe and effective patient care and many of the standards incorporated this within.

The nurses came from a wide range of experience, knowledge and skills and actively shared these with their colleagues identifying key areas of support and information for each other. It is noted from the evaluations from the delegates that certain areas caught their attention- incident reporting, not mixing the surgical prep solutions, checklists and improving patient care. Whilst an intense course for the delegates many have embraced the need for practice to improve and change, and recognise the challenges that they face in introducing these standards. This is reflected within their evaluation comments when asked what would they do differently:-

“I will advocate the use of single solutions for skin preparation by utilising the scientific rationales acquired during this particular workshop”

“Patient comfort and dignity will be promoted”

“Proper care to patient during pre, intra and post operation”

“Communicate the standards and implement changes on things we were not doing well”

“Have a chat with my manager about how we can improve operating theatres”

“I will be providing patient care depending on the new standards that we have developed for instance we will be using one solution to clean the skin and we will be writing the incidents report whenever an injury occurs”

“I will give back the knowledge I have gained through the training to my colleagues i.e. surgeons, fellow nurses and anaesthetists, that we should all have the same working standards thereby improving patient care”

“I now know my role to play in implementation and have been empowered fully to take a stand in implementing these standards for the sake of the patient”

“Make a presentation to staff working within theatre and reinforce use of the standards”

“A new approach to theatre nursing in relation to infection prevention and perioperative safety”

“Use of checklist for anaesthetists and theatre team”

“ A lot of things will change when I go back to my theatres, I will work hard and introduce and reinforce the following:- patient checklist, swab and instrument count, patient identification, infection prevention, use of one solution for patient cleaning, cleaning off powder on gloves, probably get a recovery nurse too”

“Proper handling of patient in theatre especially when transferring on and off theatre bed”

“We have gained a lot of information that will help us work better and improve our patients safety, the checklists and standards will help us work with reference to them.”

Picture one- Kate teaching the group



Picture two- the group at the end of the week with Diane and Stephanie



Diane Gilmour

March 2015.