

Visit to Lesotho, May 2010

Theory Update Programme and Practical Benchmarking

31 participants from 7 of the ten districts were present for the Perioperative Workshop held at Victoria Hotel, Maseru from 3-6 May 2010. This was the first ever Perioperative care workshop held in Lesotho, and was facilitated by 4 trainers from Friends of African Nursing. Two trustees, Kate Woodhead and Lesley Wood were accompanied by Mölnlycke Award Winners, Angela Konstanz and Rosie Macqueen. All the trainers made a visit to Queen Elizabeth II Hospital Operating Theatres before the education began, to base the training in local reality. In addition, a visit was made possible by the Ministry of Health, Nursing Division to Berea District Hospital during the week.

Theory programme

The programme focussed on refreshing their theoretical knowledge and founding principles of good perioperative practice. Many of the elements included in the programme are based around infection prevention, safe care for the patients and safe practice for the staff. We introduced the concept of documentation and handovers of care from one nurse to another. Each went back to their hospitals with examples of documentation in preoperative patient checking, intra-operative care delivered and recovery care given. They were instructed on the WHO Safe Surgery Saves Lives Campaign documentation and the rationale for introducing it for Lesotho.

We enjoyed a very lively week with students actively listening, asking questions and writing notes. They have all been encouraged to return to their hospitals as “change agents”, and reported that they will make reports to their matrons, and to enlist their assistance in the change process. There are some really excellent nurses working in Lesotho, we were impressed with their understanding and the level of questions and participation.

Overall evaluation of the course delivered was that 61% said that the course exceeded their needs and 39 % said that it met their needs. 0% said it did not meet their needs.



Resources in hospitals in Lesotho

Many of the participants reported shortages of staff, with very few nurses working in theatres with any speciality training. The key reason that many hospitals made referrals to Queen Elizabeth 11 Hospital in the capital, was lack of anaesthesia professionals.

Many nurses reported lack of equipment: including no autoclaves, no anaesthesia machine, many had no means of ventilating the theatres. Few had facilities for recovery and returned their patients straight to the wards. Various hospitals had trouble with water supply (frozen in winter, dry tanks in summer) and some had no electricity. Some reported the use of open fires (gas and electric) to warm the working environment – even in the presence of oxygen. Two hospitals had no operating table. 3 reported no autoclaves to sterilise equipment for surgery. One reported having to wash theatre clothes by hand. One reported re-use of single use abdominal swabs. Only 6/31 units had working electrosurgery (diathermy) units. Many hospitals reported lack of maintenance for any equipment – thus when it ceased to work, it was consigned to a store room.

Practice audit

The audit was undertaken in the Main Referral Hospital – although unfortunately the hospital was experiencing a strike on the day we visited. Education delivered during the theory programme will assist the staff to identify areas where change will make the most difference to practice. It is hoped that when FoAN revisits in 2011, it will be possible to re-audit and see the changes which have been made.



Perioperative Organisation

The participants were very keen to start a perioperative network and by the end of the week, a Steering Group had been formed with named officers.

FoAN is most grateful to UNFPA for the support they agreed with the Ministry of Health to fund the accommodation, food and travel costs of the nurses, to attend the education. We look forward to the return visit to Lesotho in 2011. Many thanks as well to Lesley, Rosie and Angela for their company, enthusiasm and bringing their skills and knowledge for the benefit of the nurses in Lesotho.