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CONGRESS



# NESTER EDWARDS – CHAIR REGIONAL NURSING BODY, CARICOM

IMPROVING THE HEALTH AND  
WELLBEING OF THE NURSING  
WORKFORCE:  
THE CARIBBEAN EXPERIENCE



# OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

- Factors influencing health and wellbeing of the nursing workforce in the Caribbean
- Measures implemented to improve the health and wellbeing of the Caribbean Nursing workforce.



# FACTORS INFLUENCING THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF THE CARIBBEAN NURSING WORKFORCE

- The health and wellbeing of nurses are critical factors in health systems development.
- Became a point of interest due to many Nurses feeling stressed and burnout by their work.
- Has serious impact on the quality of patient care
- A healthy and motivated nursing workforce can lead to better patient outcomes, decrease turnover, a reduction in the level absenteeism, less stress and burnout.



- In many countries in the Caribbean, the health and wellbeing of nurses are threatened and in some cases negatively impacted due to:
- Poor working conditions and other factors in the work environment, such as, staff shortage, poor communication and interpersonal relationships and physical attacks/violence by patients including mentally ill patients.
- High workload/ ratio of Nurse to Patients



- Lack of cooperation and teamwork
- Poor remuneration
- Job insecurity ( employment on contract vs Permanent establishment)
- Lack of recognition



- Natural Disasters – Nurses working in actual disaster situations can become overwhelmed and may have poor coping skills due to secondary trauma resulting from having to deal with other persons' trauma.
- Chronic non – communicable diseases



- Positive practice environments are settings that support excellence and decent work. In particular, they strive to ensure the health, safety and personal well-being of staff, support quality patient care and improve the motivation, productivity and performance of individuals and organizations. (ICN)



# ELEMENTS OF POSITIVE PRACTICE ENVIRONMENTS

- Occupational health, safety and wellbeing policies
- Fair and manageable workloads and job demands
- Effective management and leadership practices
- Healthy work – life balance
- Equal opportunity and treatment



- Opportunities for professional development and advancement
- Professional identity, autonomy and control over practice
- Job security
- Decent pay and benefit
- Safe staffing levels
- Support and supervision



- Open communication and transparency
- Recognition programs
- Access to adequate equipment, supplies and support staff

Extensive body of evidence confirms the relationships among positive work environments, job satisfaction and retention and positive patient outcomes.



# BENEFITS OF POSITIVE PRACTICE ENVIRONMENTS

- Higher employee retention rate
- Better teamwork
- Improved patient outcomes
- Job satisfaction
- Decreased rates of absenteeism and turnover



- Increased staff morale and productivity
- Improved communication and cooperation
- Feeling of being respected and valued



# CARIBBEAN EXPERIENCE ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA



- Policy on vacation leave and sick days provide nurses with substantial time off from work for adequate rest and relaxation.
- A physical fitness program is conducted 3 days per week to which all health professionals can attend for free.
- Healthy eating and healthy weight are advocated.
- A National Health Insurance is proposed to be implemented in 2019



## Professional Organizational Level

- Provides opportunities for social activities
- Resiliency training
- Emotional intelligence training



# GRENADA



- Orientation Sessions conducted for new employees and Mentors assigned
- Monthly medical evaluation for Nurses
- Health fair for Nurses during Nurses Week celebration
- Stress Management workshops/seminars
- Counseling for nursing personnel
- Employee Assistance Program



- Recognition/Awards Ceremony
- Social Activities (Health Fair and Fun Day)
- Debriefing after critical incidents



- Self defense training for nursing personnel
- Immunization of healthcare workers
- Post exposure prophylactic treatment for HIV in cases of needle stick injuries.



## Retreat for Nurse Managers in Grenada



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## Grenadian Nurses at a CPD Session



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# GUYANA

- At the policy level, there have been discussions on having doctors assigned to take care of the health of Nurses.
- Nurses showing signs of violence and depression are referred to a Senior Psychologist.
- Plans to offer a package of comprehensive medical evaluation to Nurses and Midwives on a yearly basis.
- At the Nursing Schools there are part time Counselors/ Social Workers who work with students.



- Announcement of salary increases shortly for nursing personnel
- Staff shortage due to migration is causing burnout among Nurses. In the interim, the Ministry of Public Health has been training Patient Care Assistants to assist the Nurses in providing basic nursing care.



# JAMAICA

- Provides 80% of health insurance coverage to assist in illness, diagnosis and treatment.
- Assistance is provided for prescription drugs, medical consultation, laboratory and other diagnostic procedures. Hospitalization is also covered
- Provides an accidental death and dismemberment benefit, as well as general insurance if workers are injured on the job.
- Compassionate fund, where healthcare professionals can access funds to assist in cases of serious illness



- Grant leave schemes, e.g. vacation leave, sick leave, extended sick leave, emergency leave to attend to urgent matters, maternity leave and study leave.
- Facilitates a revolving loan scheme for motor vehicles
- Residential properties to nurses at a subsidized cost.
- Convene sporting activities, such as, netball and football



- Acknowledges the work of nurses by hosting functions, such as, award ceremonies.
- Nurses Association of Jamaica represents Nurses during industrial relations matters
- Celebrates International Nurses Day annually.
- Collaborates with LASCO group of companies to host Nurses and Nursing Students of the year competition. The winners receive cash awards and other prizes. The Nurse of the year is also awarded a Master of Science Scholarship from the Ministry of Health.



- Nurses and their children enjoy the benefit of 13 million dollars education grant from the Government and the provision of 6 education scholarships at the Masters level.
- CPD sessions
- Gym at the Nurses Association business office where nurses can participate in physical fitness sessions
- Nurses fun day in August



# Jamaican Nurses participating in Orange Day Match convened by the Nurses Association of Jamaica



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# Jamaican Nurses participating in a capacity building session convened by the office of the Chief Nursing Officer



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# MONTSERRAT



- Health and wellness programs for members of staff for weight control and prevention and management of chronic non-communicable diseases.
- Health insurance system for all employees. The employees are allowed to add dependents for whom they would pay.
- Nurses formed a cricket team and they meet once per week to play and send out challenges to other Ministries for friendly weekend games



- Free medical care in the health system
- Healthy walks and hikes for staff
- Training for nurses in various areas of nursing in order to upgrade their skills and to give them the ability to be in line for upward mobility.
- The use of the appraisal system provides incentives for nurses to perform better and to be in line for promotion or further training.



# ST. KITTS/NEVIS



- Staff clinic introduced on a weekly basis one year ago (not mandatory)
- Immunization of staff
- Nurses week celebrations – include luncheon, symposium and award presentation for perfect and near perfect work attendance, as well as, most improved attendance/performance



- Christmas Day lunch
- Award of EC\$1000.00 payable to 3 nursing personnel on a monthly basis
- Lobbying for a Day Care Centre to be attached to the main hospital



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# ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES



- Administrative days/day off are given to Nurses as a token of appreciation
- One Mental Health day off per month is given to all staff at Mental Health Centre. This is in addition to their regular day/s off.
- Compassionate leave of 2 days and more is given to staff on the passing of a close relative.
- Every category of staff is given a day off once per year to participate in a social activity of their choosing -planned and executed by that category of staff. Additionally, various units within the hospital may request a day off for that unit to have an activity to build camaraderie/team work. That request is never denied. It is actually encouraged.



- All Nurses receive study leave on full pay for one year then half salary thereafter.
- Tuition scholarships are available and accessible to all Nurses, many of whom have received such.
- Other scholarship opportunities are afforded to Nurses.
- All Civil Servants including Nurses have access to a specially designed 100% mortgage facility at the Bank Of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines at a special rate. These mortgages are bringing home ownership within reach of civil servants who are first-time home buyers.



- Additionally, all Nurses have access to construction of lower and middle income homes for Vincentians within several housing developments throughout the country.
- Annual medical assessments are encouraged but are not mandatory.
- All staff are required to have medical clearance/fitness to work for confirmation to their post.
- Nurses are exempted from paying for medical care at public facilities



# SURINAME



- Development of protocols to guide practice, e.g. hand washing, cases of needle stick injuries.
- PPEs have also been purchased to guarantee the safety of the nurses.
- Renovating or remodeling of outpatient clinics taking into consideration the safety and wellbeing of nurses. This also provided a pleasant working atmosphere.
- Social worker who provides counseling for nurses with social problems and long-term illness.



- The "Care for Carers" program. Nurses who have experienced a traumatic event in the workplace can turn to a colleague who has been trained to provide Counseling services. A traumatic experience can vary, such as committing an incorrect act, the death of a patient, coming into contact with aggressive patients or visitors, or a conflict with another care provider.
- Training in dealing with aggression so that Nurses know how to act in situations where the customer is aggressive. A flow chart showing specific actions to follow is available in all departments.



- The Medical Fitness Program is one where under the supervision the company social worker, overweight staff are referred by the company doctor for movement therapy. This program is carried out in collaboration with dietetics and physiotherapy. The employees are placed in a movement / nutrition program. The aim is to help nurses who suffer from (imminent) obesity and to encourage monitoring of weight and related health risks.



- The hospital has provided staff and including nurses, with an exercise program twice a week under the supervision of a certified fitness trainer.
- They have also been given the opportunity to swim at a very reduced price with the family members at the expense of the hospital. This was done in the context of promoting a 'healthy life style' and 'family health'.
- Structured information sessions are held on infection prevention measures for nurses in order to keep them 'up to date' when it comes to protection measures.



- Quality guarantee commission that also is monitoring the health and well-being of these workers.
- Encourage the health workers to maintain a healthy lifestyle that includes a healthy diet and sport practices.
- Regular evaluation of performance and refresher training.
- The Psychiatric Center of Suriname has been providing 10 extra days of leave (what is referred to “Household Days”), to all employees for working in mental health, in addition to the 30 days given by the Government.



# DISASTER-RELATED PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA AND MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING

- 3 year project between UWI and Johnson and Johnson Foundation.
- The purpose of the project is to strengthen the capacity of nurses to deliver psychological trauma and mental health services to affected individuals while also maintaining the mental health wellbeing and resilience of themselves and their colleagues.
- Project encompasses stakeholder consultation, train the trainers curriculum development and implementation, other capacity building initiatives and culminate with a sustainable program leading to CE certification through UWI, St. Augustine Campus.



- The objectives of the project are as follows:
  - Development of a sustainable educational approach to preparing nurses to identify and address the mental health needs and /psychological trauma of individuals including nurses
  - Create a pool of well qualified nurses within the Caribbean with the requisite competencies to respond to psychological trauma.
  - Develop an educational approach that encourages inter-professional learning and collaborative practice.

A total of 28 Nurses from the Caribbean were trained as trainers.



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# Conclusion

- Health care professionals' physical and mental health provides the foundation for their ability to provide safe patient care.
- When Nurses are not recognized for the work they do their wellbeing can be negatively impacted.
- Harmonious work environments and good interpersonal relationships positively impact their wellbeing.



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