

Report on clinical update and continuous professional development for 60 trained nurses at Ankaful Psychiatric Hospital from 22nd to 26th April 2013

Background

Volunteer nurses Ghana was formed in 2001 in Ghana by nurses. The aim is to support, educate the youth and the general public on causes and prevention of mental health. Between 2003 and 2004 most of its members including the founder Ebenezer Akonnor Fianko, migrated to the UK in search for better working condition and career development. The group came together in 2009 and has since been visiting Ghana twice a year organising workshops for nurse working in the three psychiatric hospitals in Ghana. Some of the topics includes ; Effective Communication and Teamwork ,Risk Assessment and Management ,Physical care of Psychiatric patients, Effective Documentation and Report Writing ,Management of Aggression and Violence and Care of the patient in the community. The training programmes included current research on effective management of people with enduring mental health problems. Our effort has demonstrated a clear service improvement in the health institutions visited. There are documentary evident in our current website WWW.VLNGH.COM for your information.

Realising our effort and the service we provide as well as our future prospects we have changed the name from Volunteer nurses Ghana to CARE & ACTION in MENTAL HEALTH for AFRICA (CAHMA)

Introduction

The need for continuous training and professional development of nurses' in their area of practice cannot be overemphasised. Nurses are professionally accountable practitioners who must be able to identify gaps in their professional knowledge, and limits of competence to deliver appropriate care to the patients. They must seek to expand their knowledge and skills in order to maintain the safety of patients, carers, the public and colleagues. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the means by which professionals maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge, skills and develop their personal and professional qualities. Nursing practice in the Ghanaian health system requires greater improvement in this area of professional development. The workshop was planned as an educational activity which will help to maintain, develop, and increase knowledge and professional performance standards of the participants. Sixty nurses were drawn from various ward and department in to participate.

A proposal for the training was sent to ministry of health- Ghana for funding under the migration for development in Africa budget but was turn down. However looking at the greater interest how by the hospital regarding upcoming and previously run workshops, the programme was self-funded.

Objective

The objective of the training is to equip nurses with the requisite knowledge and professional competencies to enable nurses to meet the demands of a modern mental Health Care practice. It is also intended to help nurses identify their professional training needs. The training was to ensure that nurses provide care in high standards, through the process of comparing and sharing current information and evidence-based information and skills about best practice in; Effective Communication and Teamwork, Risk Assessment and Management, Physical care of Psychiatric patients, Effective Documentation and Report Writing ,Management of Aggression and Violence, Care of the patient in the community.

Event

The program was a two day workshop for sixty trained nurses and physician assistants. Due the size of the venue (conference hall of the hospital) the participant were divided into two groups. The first two days 22nd and 23rd April 2013, was for group one and group two was 24th and 25th. The participants in both groups participated fully; they contributed and shared their thoughts. Prior to the commencement of the program , Miss Ivy Dzifa Hosu read out a report on the state of mental health in Ghana obtained from the House of Commons Library – UK through my local MP ; Hon Andrews Smith, MP for East Oxford. The participants were in agreement and recommended for its publication.

During the training session various teachings and learning approaches were used and aimed at meeting individual learning styles. It involved opportunities for participants to share new ways of engaging with patients. Participants were encouraged to share professional experience in both inpatient and community care. There will also be a discussion on how best we can empower patients to be partners' in their decision making. There was opportunity for participants to contribute and share their experiences.

There was a group presentation at the end of second day of each group. The participants for each group were subdivided into four groups and presented with a case scenario describing signs and symptoms of; major depression, generalised anxiety, paranoid schizophrenia and post-traumatic stress disorder to present at the training. They were to identify risks of the case scenario; to self, others and the general public, whom to communicate or share the risk information with and the risk and crisis management plan to and as well as stating the time frame for evaluation of the implemented plan. The participants were able to apply knowledge gained from the training to do their presentation very well, they demonstrating a good understanding of the topics taught. There was enthusiastic atmosphere and contribution during the presentation.

Challenges.

A proposal detailing the program outline and budget was sent to the director of Ministry of Health Ghana for sponsorship under the Migration for development in Africa (MDA) fund unfortunately it was rejected at the last minute. Considering the advancement in preparation by the organisers and the expectation from the hospital there was no other option than to self-fund the entire program. The program was successfully conducted for both groups, apart from the last day for the second group, where we had a power failure. The hospital plant could not be used because there was not enough money for diesel to run the plant as was reported by the hospital administrator. We had to wait for over two hours before receiving power to continue with the presentation, which ended very well to the satisfaction for both organisers and participants

Recommendations

Every nurse should have a clear focus on where their professional career is heading in terms of their career pathways. There should be assurance that, professional development is linked with the transformation of the Health Service. The role of nurses in meeting the needs of patients, being it cared at home, in the community and in hospital as well as maintaining their safety should not be overlooked. Human resources are particularly crucial in mental health, especially Africa. The Migration for development in Africa (MDA) has come at the right time as an opportunity for policy maker to grab and encourage mental health professionals to migrate to Africa and support the development of mental health care and healthcare professionals.

There have been numerous occasions that patients have been refused admission and patients are left with family and friends to deal with their difficult symptoms. These families in some occasion sustain serious injuries in dealing with the violent behaviours. This frustration and difficulties force families and carer to seek other forms of care and support e.g.; fetish shrines and prayer camps .These facilities which act as second option mental health care have no formal training for its attendants in management of violence and aggression as well as risk assessment in mental health care. Experience has proved that most patients who sort help from the second option end up in fatalities

In conclusion, like many of the problems in Africa today, the key to improving Psychiatric care in Ghana is funding. The fundamental requirement for facilitating any change in practice is a change in attitudes towards people with mental health problems. Caring for mental illness relies on trained health workers not costly technology or equipment. The country needs two or more mental hospital facility in the Ashanti region and the northern region of Ghana, without this objective, improving the mental health care in the country will be almost impossible. Mental illness is treatable and treatment is affordable. We simply cannot afford to ignore the global burden on mental health. After all there is no health without mental health.

Recorded and submitted by

Ebenezer Akonnor Fianko

DIRECTOR: Care & Action for Mental Health in Africa (CAMHA)