Community Health Nursing Vision 2020: Shaping the Future

As the Canadian health care system shifts health services, not only from the hospital sector into the community, but also towards a health versus illness care system, it is important to understand and influence the future of community health nursing.

This descriptive qualitative study sought to understand priority issues for community health nurses and develop recommendations that will shape the future of community health nursing in Canada toward the year 2020. Four focus groups involving 25 nurses, and 10 interviews were conducted with community health nurses across Canada. The nurses identified a number of issues across 5 domains: practice, education, research, administration and policy, and also identified solutions to shape the future of community health nursing.

Key Findings:

• 5 themes emerged highlighting issues, a vision and solutions:

• **Community health nursing in crisis now: N**urses working in the community expressed concerns about role confusion, being "devalued", being unable to apply full scope of practice, inadequate preparation, lack of research funding, and unsupportive administration.

• **A flawed health care system:** The inadequate funding structure and illness focus in the health care system were major influencing factors hindering excellence in practice. Nurses expressed a concern for the concept of nursing.

• **Responding to the public:** Nurses recognized that in the end, the public needs to be the driving force for system change and community health nurses were the best situated, in terms of health care providers, to lead this change from a provider driven to a client driven system.

• **Vision for the future:** In their vision for the future, community health nurses would be leaders and work in the context where people live, work and play.

• **Community health nurses -The solution makers:** Solutions considered all nursing domains including a common definition and vision, working to full scope of practice, a higher profile, "refocus nursing education", research in community health nursing to inform policy, administrative support, and health care policy redirection.

Key Implications:

• Findings suggest that community health nurses aspire to shape their future in all nursing domains for 2020 and recommend defining community health nursing, and strengthening research, education, administration and knowledge transfer.

• Participants also recommend an aggressive shift in the health care system from an illness to a health focus consistent with a primary health care system to meet the changing public expectations.

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