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USING DIARIES TO EXPLORE THE WORK EXPERIENCES OF PRIMARY HEALTH CARE CLINIC NURSING MANAGERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

STTI conference

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OUTLINE

- Background and justification for research
- Overview of the diary method
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion

BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

- Current health system challenges in SA
 - Changing disease burden
 - Inadequate or lack of resources
 - Sub-optimal performance of the health system, particularly at PHC level
 - Rising community expectations and demands exacerbated by insufficient preparation and training of staff for community-based work
- PHC central theme of current health system reforms
 - 2010 - Primary Health Care (PHC) re-engineering
 - 2011- Green paper on National Health Insurance
- Reforms primarily nurse-based
 - Expanded roles due to current health system reforms
 - Doctors and other health professionals supportive
- Management of PHC services critical success factor
 - Nurses are PHC clinic managers

OVERVIEW OF DIARY METHOD

- “...intensive, repeated self reports that aim to capture events, reflections, moods, pains or interactions near the time they occur” (Iida M 2012)
- **Interval design approach**
 - Reflect on experiences at specific times
- **Signal method**
 - Alarm reminder
- **Event-contingent design or solicited diary**
 - Participants record event that answers research question

RATIONALE FOR USING DIARIES

- Diaries important in:
 - Capturing information participants likely to forget
 - Experiences that are often inaccessible using traditional methods e.g. interviews
- Extensive use
 - Psychology & sociology
 - Public health research
- Clinical research
 - Monitor pain, sleep patterns & addictions among patients
 - Chronic medical conditions, health service utilisation, medical purchases & payments
- Limited use in health systems research
 - Low & middle-income country settings

AIM OF DIARY STUDY

- To explore the work experiences of PHC clinic nursing managers
- NB: Small part of overall doctoral study-job satisfaction survey, measuring competencies & facility assessment

SAMPLING STRATEGY

- Sub sample of 22 nursing managers from bigger study were selected in two South African provinces
 - Free State n=10
 - Gauteng n=12

METHODS

Keeping a diary

- Write about one thing that happened at work that week that really had an effect on you
- Please write a date whenever you make an entry about:
 1. What was the event?
 2. Why did it stand out for you or why did it stick in your mind?
 3. How did it make you feel?
 4. What did you learn from it?
 5. How will it affect the way you work in the future?
- Weekly text message reminders



"She wrote a diary, not a blog."

ANALYSIS

- Thematic content analysis
 - MAXQDA ver. 11
- Reliability
 - Inter-coder agreement (two researchers)
- Validity
 - Diary feedback discussion

RESPONSE RATE

- 15/22 nursing managers participated representing 68% response rate
 - Majority of respondents were female
 - 31 to 60 years
 - Five and 15 years of work experience
- Most participants made their diary entries at home

THEMES

- Although inter-related and not mutually exclusive, the top five themes were:
 - Health system deficiencies
 - Staff shortages
 - Unsupportive supervision
 - Expression of negative emotions
 - Service delivery
- Other themes were:
 - Leadership and governance
 - Perceived burden of meetings

HEALTH SYSTEM DEFICIENCIES

- Diary entries revealed feelings of disempowerment, at times ‘paralysis’, about health system deficiencies, ranging from poor emergency medical services, to lack of an enabling environment for service delivery
 - *This is not the first incident, but it’s definitely the worst in terms of time turnaround. ...A patient lost her life having waited for more than two hours for an ambulance. Unless the problem is resolved... more patients will complicate or die waiting for an “emergency vehicle.” [Respondent # 3, Gauteng province]*

STAFF SHORTAGES

- Staff shortages of all categories had a negative impact on clinic management activities
 - *It was a hectic week, only three nurses on duty on Wednesday and Thursday. I was doing curative [care], adults and children at the same time and I was also busy with statistics in the office [Respondent # 5, Gauteng province]*
 - *This was a difficult week. I had little time for admin. I only had one professional nurse so I had to consult patients the whole day [Respondent # 15, Free State province]*

UNSUPPORTIVE SUPERVISION

- The diary entries reflected the apparent lack of understanding from their supervisors
 - *She [supervisor] said there would be no replacement as I only have one entry point in the clinic...she shouted at me that whether I agree or not, she is going to instruct my clerk to go to another clinic which she did...she was so rude and dropped the phone in my ear... ” [Respondent # 1, Gauteng province]*

EXPRESSION OF NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

- The multitude of health system problems, staff shortages, unsupportive supervision coalesce in an expression of negative emotions in the diaries
 - *I was exhausted... I asked God why I had to come to work with such demotivated staff. I'm starting to hate my work... I know ... why they are demotivated... they couldn't get study leave, there is no Performance Development Management System, even though the population is increasing steadily. It's hard to work with demotivated staff because you must always follow after them for things to be done properly. The thing that hurts the most is that there is no support from coordinators of programmes. It's just complaints from patients then staff and from management. Nobody understands the depression we are going through. [Respondent # 5, Free State province]*

SERVICE DELIVERY

- Diary entries suggest nursing managers who have a great concern for patients and quality of care delivered:
 - *...the clinic was full...with many babies for immunisation & sick adults...The passage leading to my office was packed! I had to ask 13 antenatal clients (three new cases) to wait inside the small fourth consultation room. I had to attend to family planning and to ARV initiation clients who needed assessment & have their bloods taken for baseline. To TB patients who were collecting their medication and also referring one very sick patient which took almost an hour. At that time (almost 10h00) the supervisor had not followed up if the professional nurse who was supposed to relieve me had indeed come or not... [Respondent # 1, Gauteng province]*

DISCUSSION

- Diary entries reflect complex problems of health system deficiencies, staff shortages and unsupportive supervision that PHC clinic nursing managers have to deal with
- Diaries dominated by negative emotions, which could be a proxy of stress experienced by these managers
- Although small & qualitative, the findings have implications for successful implementation of health system reforms
- Identified challenges would need to be addressed by policy-makers

CONCLUSION

- Diaries are an innovative method in capturing nursing management experiences
- Diaries were cathartic & encouraged reflection for nursing managers
- Provide confidentiality & anonymity
- Diary studies are relevant for
 - health policy makers &
 - qualitative researchers in public health
- The expressed concerns of nursing managers must be addressed to ensure the success of health reforms, particularly at the PHC level

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