

Understanding diversity and culture in caring for our veteran population

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Program/Project Purpose: The purpose of this program, a nursing course designed to care for veterans, is to help students 1. gain a greater appreciation for those who currently and formerly served in the military; 2. learn that culture within the veteran population varies according to branches of the military and service time-line; and 3. recognize that veteran diversity impacts healthcare needs. Students prepare to meet the needs of our Veterans through course activities and assignments that address the diversity of the veteran culture. Through interacting with veterans and families from various branches and periods of military service, students learn that diversity impacts the type of healthcare needed and offered.

Structure/Method/Design: Through didactic and clinical learning activities, students have the opportunity to learn about military culture. In order to fully understand the veteran, their culture, and associated health care, students interact with veterans and healthcare personnel face-to-face to gain insight into the diversity of veterans. Individuals that students learn from include (but are not limited to) chaplains; veterans from most major U.S. conflicts; veterans suffering from multiple healthcare issues; Army, Air Force, and Navy nurses and medics; as well as Holocaust survivors and concentration camp liberator.

Outcome & Evaluation: Through varied activities and interactions, students gain a greater appreciation of veteran culture. Students learn that veterans are a unique and diverse population and, depending on the conflict, have similar and distinct health care concerns. Students come to understand that military culture affects how men and women view healthcare and seek treatment. They learn that nurses must become veteran advocates because veterans are less likely to express concerns about emotional or healthcare needs, leading to health problems going unnoticed until severe.

Going Forward: Upon completion of this course, students commit for future practice to take time to ask veterans about their experiences in the military, specifically when and where they served. Students will continue to learn about the most common health concerns of returning veterans. Students will be observant and keep communication open in order to identify problems before they become severe.

Abstract #: 1.020_NEP

Impact of medical plurality on care engagement and treatment outcomes among people living with HIV in Limpopo, South Africa

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Background: Medical plurality, the concurrent existence of multiple medical systems, is particularly important in the South African context. The traditional health sector continues to serve as a significant component of health seeking practices for patients living with HIV, yet collaborations with biomedicine for HIV care remains a challenge. This study utilized an in-depth survey to document the engagement of individuals living with HIV, with alternative health sectors: traditional medicine, herbal medicine, and faith healers.

Methods: The participants in the study were both male and female patients living with HIV between the ages of 18 and 65, who had been on ARTs for at least one year. Every participant was a patient at either the Fhulufhelo HIV Clinic or the Thohoyandou Health Center in Limpopo, South Africa. After listening to a brief explanation of the study and its purpose, patients had the option of volunteering to take a survey, which inquired about their adherence to ARTs, engagement with traditional health sectors and their understanding of HIV. Verbal and written consent were obtained from every participant and the survey data from every participant was included in the statistical and thematic analysis.

Findings: The analyzed sample (n=102) consisted of 71.6% female and 28.4% males. 25.2% admitted to ever using herbal medicine. 21.4% admitted to ever using traditional medicine. 32% admitted to engaging with faith healers. 34% of the participants had an unsuppressed viral load (n=35). Of the patients that were unsuppressed, 46.3% of them were among the participants who had ever engaged in any of the alternative sectors. While 22.2% of those unsuppressed had never engaged in these alternative sectors.

Interpretation: This research suggests engagement with alternative health care sectors is associated with unsuppressed viral loads. This study is important as it may encourage the development of interventions to support better individual and population health outcomes and collaboration between biomedical providers and traditional healers. One limitation was the relatively small sample size (n=102), in comparison to the total population of people living with HIV in the Vhembe District of South Africa.

Funding: University of Virginia Center for Global Health and NIH MHIRT.

Abstract #: 1.021_NEP

Surgical repair programs for children with non-critical congenital heart disease in low- and middle-income countries: a scoping review

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Background: Congenital heart disease (CHD), the presence of a clinically significant structural heart defect at birth, has a similar incidence globally. However, the lack of quality health systems, available resources, and established programs makes management of CHD more challenging in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) compared to high-income countries. This scoping review examines current surgical care programs in LMICs for CHD and the outcomes of individuals with non-critical CHD.