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Knowledge and practices of occupational health nurse practitioners in the management of diabetes mellitus in South Africa

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Background: The prevalence of diabetes in South Africans between the ages of 20 and 70 is predicted to rise from 3.4% to 3.9% by the year 2025. No clear assessment of the nursing care Occupational Health Nursing Practitioners (OHNPs) provide to diabetic employees in SA. OHNPs should ensure that workers with diabetes are screened, monitored, and managed effectively in the workplace.

Aim: To assess the knowledge and practices of OHNPs in managing diabetes in workplaces in SA.

Objectives: The main objective of the study is to explore the extent of knowledge and practices of OHNPs regarding screening for diabetes, monitoring of diabetes and management of diabetes in the workplace.

Materials and Methods: A Quantitative survey design was selected; population was OHNPs that were members of the South African Society of Occupational Health Nurse Practitioners. Sample included members with access to emails. Collection tool used was an electronic self-administered questionnaire.

Results: 45% of respondents rated knowledge of diabetes management as good/average, 55% rated knowledge of screening as good, and 44% rated their knowledge of diabetes management as good and 7% as very good. 51% of OHNPs routinely screened workers for diabetes. Majority of OHNPs indicated the Fasting Blood Glucose was the diagnostic test used to diagnose diabetes. 73-85% of OHNPs indicated five aspects of immediate care were performed after diagnosis.

Conclusions: OHNPs consider their knowledge on different aspects of diabetes to be average/good; lack of knowledge on types of diabetes, and gaps identified regarding tests for screening/diagnosis of diabetes of concern. OHNPs use different approaches to conduct diabetes awareness initiatives to promote health. Gap was found in OHNPs' practice of screening for diabetes and their knowledge. The five aspects of care necessary after diagnosis of DM were performed.

Recommendations: Additional research to determine OHNPs' actual knowledge of diabetes management; development of a standard/guideline for nursing practice; continuous training and professional development programmes on screening and diagnosing of diabetes is required. Investigation on constraints OHNPs face with when implementing health promotion and the impact of health promotion initiatives; OHNPs informed of immediate care to be performed on diagnosis of diabetes to improve their knowledge base and to change practice for continuity of care and management of newly diagnosed clients is needed.

Biography

Margot Pretorius has completed her Masters at Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), Cape Town, South Africa. She is the course Co-ordinator and Lecturer for the BTech: Occupational Health Nursing programme at CPUT. She has been a member of the South African Society of Occupational Health Nurses (SASOHN) for the past 15+ years.

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