

RAPID APPRAISAL OF THE SYSTEM IN WHICH PALLIATIVE CARE NURSES ARE PRESCRIBING IN UGANDA

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BACKGROUND

Nurses and Clinical Officers trained as palliative care prescribers work within the Ugandan Health System. Thus in order to evaluate nurse prescribing it is important to understand this system and what impact, if any, it has on the nurses and their ability to manage pain and other symptoms within palliative care. Key issues such as procurement of essential medications, health systems capacity, recognition of specialist roles, understanding of senior colleagues may have an impact which needs to be explored and evaluated.

AIM

To undertake a rapid appraisal of the Ugandan Health System in order to ascertain the context for nurse prescribing in palliative care.

METHODOLOGY

An initial proposal was developed collaboratively by APCA, HAU, MPCU, PCAU and MoH with ethical approval from HAUREC and UNCST and approved by the WHO. The research was undertaken as part of the Uganda Palliative Care Nurse Leadership Fellowship programme. Rapid appraisal allows qualitative data to be collected in a systematic yet participatory way. Data is collected from a number of sources and then triangulated, essential for validity and scientific rigor. Data was collected within the 4 main phases of rapid appraisal:

- collection of information from existing written sources.
- key informant interviews with identified individuals working with the system or identified as part of the appraisal.
- site observations made by the researchers.
- feedback and validation of the results.



RESULTS

The rapid appraisal was undertaken in ten settings (both governmental and non governmental) in nine districts and the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF). Data was collected between August 2016 and January 2017 and included key informant interviews with patients and/or caregivers, senior nurses, hospital administrators, medical directors, records officers, pharmacists, and PC nurses, in each setting.

Districts included in the Rapid Appraisal
• Arua • Gulu/ Lacor
• Mbale • Moroto • Tororo
• Kabale • Kagando
• Masaka • Mulago
• UPDF/Bombo

Overall themes identified included:

- Documentation;
- Legal processes;
- Accessibility and availability of morphine/supply chain;
- Patients seen;
- Health care facilities;
- Patient/family education; and
- The evaluation of treatment and re-assessment.

Within these themes key issues, such as training, availability of morphine, referral pathways, support from management were identified as very important and key to providing an enabling environment for nurse prescribing within the palliative care context.

Examples of Sub-Themes

1. Documentation

- Palliative Care Register
- Patient documentation
- Challenges

5. Health Care Facilities

- Referral pathways
- Training
- Staffing
- How Palliative Care is organized
- Impact of Palliative Care at the hospital
- Support from management towards Palliative Care
- Challenges

CONCLUSION

The research reflects the importance of the system in which the nurses and clinical officers are working impacting the delivery of effective palliative care. Health systems strengthening approaches led by the MoH are therefore essential to provide an enabling environment for palliative care within the Ugandan Health System.