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Role transition experiences of professional nurses to primary healthcare nursing

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ABSTRACT

The transition process into specialist nursing can be challenging for any professional nurse. There is a general expectation that once a professional nurse has completed an additional specialised qualification, they should be ready for practice on the first day. Strange (2015) alluded to the fact that lack of preparation and role transition structure can ultimately impact the care of patients. Currently, there exists a gap in the knowledge of professional nurses' experiences of role transition to PHCN.

The purpose of the study was to explore the role transition experiences of professional nurses to primary health care nursing in the City of Johannesburg.

An explanatory sequential mixed methods study design, which consisted of two phases was used in this study. **Phase 1:** consisted of a quantitative research study conducted using a self-administered Nurse Practitioner Role Transition Scale (NPRTS) developed by Cusson et al. (2015). The study participants were selected using a total population sampling strategy that resulted in a sample size of (n=80) trained PHC nurses from the seven regions within the City of Johannesburg in the 2019 to 2020.

Phase 2: Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted on purposively selected sample until data saturation reached at (n=12) participants. The participants were selected from the participants in the first phase. Thematic data analysis was conducted yielding two themes, five categories and eight sub-categories.

Findings showed that the role transition experiences included role change to being an independent patient care giver and taking more responsibilities in filling in the new role. The newly qualified PHCNs had to navigate: health personnel related challenges, institutional and emotional challenges. Some of the challenges expressed were lack of support from management and colleagues, shortage of staff, inadequate medications and equipment, and lack of orientation and mentorship.

Recommendations: It is recommended that there is a development of orientation programmes and establishment of mentoring programmes that has a dedicated person responsible for the novice PHC nurses during their first year of practice to enhance supportive attitudes towards the newly qualified PHCN. Secondly, there are adequate resources needed to effectively function as a PHC nurse. The third recommendation is the need for institutions to increase the number of training of PHCNs to mitigate the shortage of staff, work overload and burnout. The final recommendation, is the establishment of a PHCNs forum, an association whereby all PHCNs could receive updates and guidelines on everything relevant to PHC.

Keywords: primary health care nurses, role transition, experience, professional nurses