**Lessons Learned From 2017 Nursing Conference**

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The Nursing Conference was held on the 9th June 2017 as part of the Africa Health Congress organized by Informa Life Sciences Exhibitions. The conference was held at Gallagher Convention Center, Midrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. The registration fees of the conference will be donated to the Academy of Nursing South Africa (ANSA). The attendees included nurses and nursing students from all over Africa.

The theme of the conference was “*A paradigm shift in specialist nursing”.* The objectives of the conference were to discuss the regulatory changes which influence the specialist nursing and advances in the field, assess the state of specialist nursing in various African countries, compare staffing norms in specialist units and identify the best approaches, and to form a platform to debate nursing challenges in relation to medico-legal incidents and how to avoid them. Prof Sarie Human, who is the Chairperson of Laws and Practice Committee at the South African Nursing Council (SANC), and Mr F Smith who is the Nursing Operations Manager at Life Healthcare Group gave the opening remark at the conference.

The conference was divided into four sessions. For instance, session1 was titled “Specialist Nursing Landscape in Africa” and it was moderated by Mr Fasie Smith. In this session the focus was on the meaning of specialist nursing, what does it entail and how different nursing education institutions developed different specialist nursing programmes in Africa. The first speaker was Prof. N. A Sukati who is the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Swaziland. Prof Sukati was speaking about the “Competencies and education of specialist nurses in Swaziland”. Dr Lydia Aziato who is a senior lecturer and head of the department of adult health in the school of nursing in the University of Ghana, was speaking about “The trajectory of specialist nurse’s development in Ghana”. The last speaker of the session one was Dr E Chirwa whose speech was titled “Specialist nurses landscape in Malawi”. Dr E Chirwa is the vice president of the International on federation of Midwives and a Vice Chancellor of Malawi University of Science and Technology.

The second session was moderated by Prof S Human. The focus of this session was on the medico-legal incidents. In this session, there was a panel discussion on “Nursing challenges with medico-legal incidents”. The panelists of the session were a Hayward who is a lecturer in nursing at Witwatersrand University in South Africa (WITS), Dr A D du Plessis who was an Independent Midwifery Consultant and Researcher, and L Fletcher who is a Mediator for Life Healthcare. All panelists are from South Africa.

Session three focused on specialist nursing education and it was moderated by F Smith. Prof S Human opened the session by presenting about the “State of specialist nursing in South Africa”. This was followed by panel discussion where each panelist had a short presentation before the discussion. The panelists were Prof AJ Pienaar who is the Acting Director of School of Nursing Science (SONS) in the North-West University (Mafikeng) and a chairperson of the Education Committee of the South African Nursing Council, N Geyer who is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Nursing Education Association (NEA), and T Vermaak who is the Manager of Netcare Education Faculty of Nursing and Ancillary Healthcare. All the panelists of this session were also from South Africa.

The fourth session which was the last one was also moderated by Prof. S Human. This last session was about a panel discussion on the “Staffing norms”. The panelists of the session were J Dzebu who is a Unit Manager of the Gynaecology Unit in Charlotte Maxeke Hospital, L Young who is the Managing Executive of Charisma Nursing Agency, and L Balfour who is a Unit Manager of the Intensive Care Unit in the Life Healthcare in Johannesburg. Just like in other panel discussions, all the panelists were from South Africa.

The lessons learnt in the conference are a specialist nursing programme should be aligned with the unique needs of the country (South Africa) in which it is provided from planning, development and implementation. The liaison with the department responsible for health in that country will be vital. International and national collaborations are important to start and provide the specialist nursing programme. The specialist nurses need to take leadership and make their specialty recognized. There is a need to put mechanisms to keep the nursing specialists in practice to provide specialized nursing care which is hard in quite a numerous African countries at the moment.

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