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Adherence to universal precautions and its associated factors among nurses caring for critically ill patients in Dar es salaam, Tanzania

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Background: Globally, Healthcare workers particularly those working in critical care settings are at high risk of occupational exposure to infections. Owing to the severe consequences of blood-borne infections, surveillance systems to monitor exposure to body fluids in health-care settings have been established in the developed world. In contrast, such systems are not available and consequently, exposure to body fluids is rarely reported, documented and monitored in many African countries.

Objective: We aimed to assess adherence to Universal Precautions and its associated factors among nurses caring for critically ill patients in Dar es Salaam.

Methodology: A quantitative cross sectional study was conducted in Critical care settings of Muhimbili National Hospital (MNH) and Muhimbili Orthopaedic Institute (MOI) among nurses. Data was collected through direct observation and self-administered questionnaire. Knowledge, practice and factors affecting adherence to Universal Precautions were assessed. Continuous and categorical variables were compared using the student T-test and chi-square analyses respectively.

Results: A total of 144 nurses were enrolled in this study. All participants were assessed using questionnaire and observation was conducted in only 42 (29.2%) of participants. The mean age of the participants was 35.7 years and 84%


were females. 81(56.3%) of participants had attained a diploma level of education. 55(38%) were found to have good knowledge of universal precautions. 123(85.5%) reported they always wash hands, however, just 28.9% of participants were observed to wash hands before putting on gloves. 94.4% reported they always use gloves, 67.4% reported they always wear a gown and 55.6% reported that they always wear a mask. Regarding sharps management 135(93.8%) reported good practice and among the observed participants 40/42(95.2%) demonstrated good sharps management practice.

Conclusions: Adherence to Universal precautions amongst nurses in Tanzania's major hospital is variably poor. It is crucial to establish surveillance systems to monitor exposure to body fluids in this set-up.

Speaker Biography

Salima Abdallah Wibonela is a working as a critical care nursing officer in cardiac ICU at Jakaya Kikwete Cardiac Institute, Dar es salaam, Tanzania. She has experience in working in research institution, clinical practice, administration and teaching. 2013 to 2015 she attained knowledge and skills in research methodology at Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences. She is now a researcher among other Tanzanian nurses through her on-going research activities.

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