

RESEARCH ARTICLE

SELF-ASSESSED LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE OF PUBLIC HEALTH NURSES IN BAGUIO CITY, PHILIPPINES ON GLOBAL COMPETENCIES



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Abstract

The emerging global needs call for an expanded role of public health nurses in global health. Their competency is essential in responding to the emerging health challenges and to contribute to the attainment of Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals. This paper determined the self-assessed level of confidence of public health nurses on the global health competencies. The study utilized a quantitative, descriptive research design. A survey tool that contains a list of the global health competencies on global burden of disease, health implications of travel and displacement, social and environmental determinants of health, globalization of health and health care, health care in low resource settings, health care as a human right and development resource was utilized. A total of 17 public health nurses from the 16 health centers in Baguio City, Philippines were recruited through total enumeration. Higher scores were given to the competencies on social and environmental determinants of health while lower scores were found on competencies related to globalization of health and health care. Overall, the public health nurses in Baguio City assessed themselves as often confident on the global health competencies. The study highlights areas for improved education and training, which are essential in attaining the global health competencies. Integration of global health concepts in the practice of public health nurses is required to enhance their competency in dealing with global health issues and challenges. This study recommends global health training for public health nurses to enhance their awareness, preparation, and confidence in the global health competencies.

Keywords: *Global health competencies, Public health nurse, Philippines*

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Introduction

The staggering health disparities and issues in the accessibility of health care (Flood & Lemmens, 2013) give a logical reason on the increasing interest in global health (Veras et al., 2013; Macfarlane, Jacobs & Kaaya, 2008). As the concept of globalization in health is continuously evolving, strategies to reduce health disparities and to respond to the changing health needs are receiving much attention (United Nations, 2014; Reutter & Kushner, 2010). On this note, globalization shapes the development of healthcare services (Keighley, 2013; Segouin, Hodges, & Brechat, 2005). The process of improving the quality of services to address emerging health challenges is therefore seen as a global challenge for public health (Wall, 2007).

In 2001, the World Health Assembly supported the call to strengthen the nursing and midwifery professions by passing resolution WHA54.12 that validates World Health Organization's (WHO) commitment to the scaling-up of the health professions (WHO, 2009). At par with this approach is the attempt of WHO in attaining global health equity by establishing the Commission on the Social Determinants of Health in 2005 (Schofield, 2007).

The radical change in the health care delivery due to the emerging global needs imply that nurses have an expanding role in global health (Sherwood, n.d.). In the second Arista conference commissioned by the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing, the experts concluded that nurses make the most significant contributions to the health of communities by providing holistic and humane care (Dickenson-Hazard, 2004). In response, Wilson (2011) stressed that nurses should portray competency in their practice of a globalized health care. Likewise, Wilson, Callender, Hall, Jogerst, Torres, and Velji (2014) assert that identifying global health competencies have an impact in the performance, accountability, and quality of care provided by health care professions. Indeed, a basic set of competencies is important in all disciplines that engage in global health (Wilson et al. 2014).

Leffers and Mitchell (2010), however, argue that despite the participation of nurses in global health, they still lack a theoretical and empirical base upon which to frame their global practice. Consequently, this dilemma can impact their competency in addressing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary General of the United Nations, emphasized that the MDGs established a blueprint for tackling the most pressing development challenges of our time (United Nations, 2014). The competency of nurses, therefore, is essential in responding to the emerging health challenges and to contribute to the attainment of MDGs and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Flood & Lemmens, 2013).

The World Health Organization (2009) emphasized that the increasing complexities in health care provision, the increasing number of health professionals at different levels, and the need for equitable access to health care necessitates global standards. Nurses and health care colleagues need to bring a clear voice and vision for the future of global health to address the MDGs and support the emerging SDGs (Klopper, 2015). The role of nurses in global health highlights the need for them to understand that global circumstances influence direct and indirect determinants of health (Wall, 2007).

Determining the perceptions of nurses on the global health competencies can affect their preparation and capability to assume the roles of a global health care professional in varied settings. For instance, the WHO reports that the Philippines suffers a "triple burden" of disease, which are (i) high incidence of all key communicable diseases and 13/17 of the WHO recognized neglected tropical diseases remain endemic, (ii) increasing level of non-communicable diseases and high prevalence of high-risk factors, and (iii) the third highest disaster prone country in the world (WHO, 2014). These data illuminates a great challenge for Filipino nurses and allied health care professionals to invest efforts in improving the health status of the country and attain the MDGs. The health care delivery strategies, however, may appear hollow if the health care providers, like the nurses who are considered to be the bulk of the health force, are not

confident in meeting global health. In this regard, this paper aims to determine the confidence of Filipino public health nurses on global health competencies.

Method

The study utilized a quantitative, descriptive research design. A total of 17 public health nurses in Baguio City, Philippines were recruited through total enumeration. A modified survey tool adapted from Wilson et al. (2007) was used to gather data. The tool was developed by the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada Resource Group on Global Health and the Global Health Education Consortium (Wilson et al., 2007). It contains a list of global health competencies for medical students but was adapted for nurses. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the six subscales of the tool ranged from 0.78 to 0.96 suggesting acceptable levels of internal consistency (Wilson et al., 2007).

Data collection occurred in the Baguio Health Department (BHD) after securing the approval of Dr. Rowena Galpo, MPH and Ms. Purificacion Serna, RN, HSM, the city health officer and the chief nurse of BHD, respectively. An informed consent was secured prior to data collection. The data were treated by tallying the frequency of answers in each item and computing their weighted means.

Findings

There were seventeen (17) public health nurses who participated in the study, seven (41%) of those are aged 35 to 44 years, six (35%) are aged 25 to 34 years, and four (24%) are more than 45 years old. Majority (82%) of the respondents are Baccalaureate degree holders and 12% held a master's degree. Nine nurses (53%) had been in public service for less than 4 years and four (24%) had worked as a public health nurse for 5 to 10 years and more than 10 years, respectively. Table 1 lists the characteristics of the respondents.

The self-assessed level of confidence of public health nurses in Baguio City, Philippines on global competencies is shown in Table 2.

The findings reveal that overall the public health nurses assessed themselves as "Often confident" on the global health competencies. In the six subcategories of the global health competencies, the respondents had the highest mean score on social and environmental determinants of health whereas globalization of health and health care was scored the least.

Discussion

As the concept of global health implies health care professionals to competently address the evolving global health issues and challenges, it requires them to be confident in their roles to meet the global health competencies. Although the findings reveal that public health nurses are abreast with the expected competencies, it suggests that certain limitations may have influenced their confidence levels. In a similar study, 63 nurses in 21 African countries and 618 in the Americas also awarded relatively higher scores on the competencies related to social and environmental health and ranked competencies related to globalization of health and health care relatively lower (Warren, Breman, Budhathoki, Farley, & Wilson, 2015).

Table 1.
Characteristics of respondents

Characteristic (N=17)	n	(%)
Age		
25 to 34 years old	6	(35%)
35 to 44 years old	7	(41%)
45 years old and above	4	(24%)
Highest Educational Attainment		
Baccalaureate Degree	14	(82%)
Master's Degree	2	(12%)
Doctorate Degree	1	(6%)
Number of Years in Service		
Less than 4 years	9	(53%)
5 to 10 years	4	(24%)
More than 10 years	4	(24%)

Table 2.
Self-assessed Level of Confidence of Public Health Nurses
in Baguio City, Philippines on Global Competencies

Competency	Weighted mean	Level of Confidence	
Global burden of disease	1.57	Often Confident	Legend: Score Level of Confidence 2.25-3.00 Always confident 1.50-2.24 Often confident 0.75-1.49 Sometimes confident 0-0.74 Not confident
Health implications of migration, travel, and displacement	1.55	Often Confident	
Social and environmental determinants of health	1.89	Often Confident	
Globalization of health and health care	1.42	Sometimes Confident	
Health care in low-resource settings	1.76	Often Confident	
Health as a human right and development resource	1.76	Often Confident	
Overall mean	1.66	Often Confident	

The confidence of the public health nurses in dealing with the global health competencies may be attributed to their educational preparation wherein their nursing curriculum has not yet fully recognized the evolving needs of the globalization of health. For instance, the need for nursing graduates to be fully aware on the burden of disease, social determinants of health, and other global circumstances is essential in their preparation as they enter the nursing workforce. The findings suggest limitation in the theoretical and empirical base in the global practice of the public health nurses (Lefferes & Mitchell, 2010).

It is important to note, however, that refinements in the preparation of new nursing graduates today have been initiated. The new nursing curriculum has determined and realigned the current competencies to the expected roles of nurses in the global and local health developments. This enhancement in the curriculum has been explicitly defined in 2012 as the National Nursing Core Competency Standards has been implemented and planned to be integrated into the service and academic systems (International Labour Organization, 2014). The combined efforts of Commission on Higher Education, Philippine Regulation Commission, and International Labour Organization Decent Work Across Borders project have recognized the need to standardize the competencies across the Philippines to ensure the nursing education and practice are locally relevant and internationally competitive.

Similarly, in response to the issue, the World Health Organization has recently initiated the development of global nursing education standards to prepare graduates of initial nursing and midwifery educational programs to be culturally competent, understand the social determinants of health, and be competent in addressing population health needs (Wilson, 2011). The initiatives and resolutions approved by the World Health Assembly also highlight the importance of nurses, as well as midwives, in the improvement of the health system (Warren, Mendes, Fumincelli, & Treizan, 2015).

Public health nurses need to embrace the significance of being globally competent. Focusing on the origins of international and global health issues requires nurses to analyze the political economy of health and understand the structural issues which underpin health and social issues (Breda, 2012). This view calls for the proactive efforts of nurse executives in assisting nurses with a global lens and in the context of a global agenda for better health for populations (Breda, 2012). These strategies need to consider the recognition of international, social, political, economic, environmental, and cultural issues that can affect health and health care around the world (Carlton, Ryan, Ali, & Kelsey, 2007).

The low mean score in the globalization of health and health care could be attributable to the limited awareness on the roles of public health nurses in the changing health patterns, impact of

nursing migration, cultural implications, increasing international level associated with the emergence of communicable diseases, and health systems. This limitation can also influence the preparation to assume the roles of global health care personnel. The findings further suggest that public health nurses need to be immersed with appropriate global health training in order to be equipped with the knowledge, skills, attitude, and confidence in meeting global health competencies. In the context of global health, the interconnectedness between local and global health challenges require nurses to reach out to demand the highest quality of health care by embracing diversity of the health needs of the population (Jeffreys, 2008).

Global standards and competencies are essential to be permeated in the practice of public health nurses in the local setting as the increasing range of health issues transcend national boundaries (Kickbusch et al., 2007 cited in Bradbury-Jones, 2009). The development of health care systems and improvement of competency, however, does not solely demand the efforts of the workforce themselves but on policy makers. Kickbusch (2002) stressed that responsible political action is needed to develop a new mindset and lay the groundwork for better global health in the future.

The complexity of global health work demands nurses to be confident and competent in performing global health strategies, hence, partnerships between the Department of Health, educational institutions, and related agencies should be developed to enhance the confidence and the competency of public health nurses in meeting global health competencies. This strategy will provide opportunities for public health nurses to be globally competent as manifested by better performance, accountability, and provision of quality of care (Wilson et al., 2014).

Conclusions

The study highlights areas for improved education and training, which are essential in

attaining the global health competencies. Integration of global health concepts in the practice of public health nurses is required to enhance their competency in dealing with global health issues and challenges. This study recommends global health training for public health nurses to enhance their awareness, preparation, and confidence in the global health competencies.

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“ As a nurse, we have the opportunity to heal the heart, mind, soul and body of our patients, their families and ourselves. They may forget your name, but they will never forget how you made them feel. ”

– Maya Angelou