

The experiences of primary health care practitioners managing emergencies at a Primary Health Care level

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BACKGROUND

The focus of Primary Health Care (PHC) is on promotion of health and disease prevention, however acute episodes and emergencies still occur at this level of care. The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified strengthening of emergency care at a PHC level as a way of lessening the burden of disease on the overall health system. It is not known how health care practitioners at PHC level experience management of emergencies.



RESEARCH AIM AND METHODS

Aim:

The objective of the study was to explore and describe the experiences of health care practitioners in dealing with emergencies at Primary Health Care facilities in the Gauteng province, South Africa.

Methods:

Within an overarching qualitative approach semi structured interviews were conducted to collect data from a maximum variation sample of health care practitioners. Participants included professional nurses and doctors from various levels of the district health care system. Data were transcribed, imported into MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software platform, and analysed using qualitative content analysis.



SETTING:

The study was conducted in Gauteng province in South Africa, focussing on the three levels of the District Health Services namely clinics, community health care centres and district hospitals.

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	5	22.72
Male	17	77.27
Race		
Black	16	72.72
White	1	4.54
Indian	1	4.54
Coloured	2	9.09
Other	2	9.09
Profession		
Nurse	8	36.36
Doctor	14	63.63
Field of expertise		
Management	12	54.54
Non – Management	10	45.45



FINDINGS:

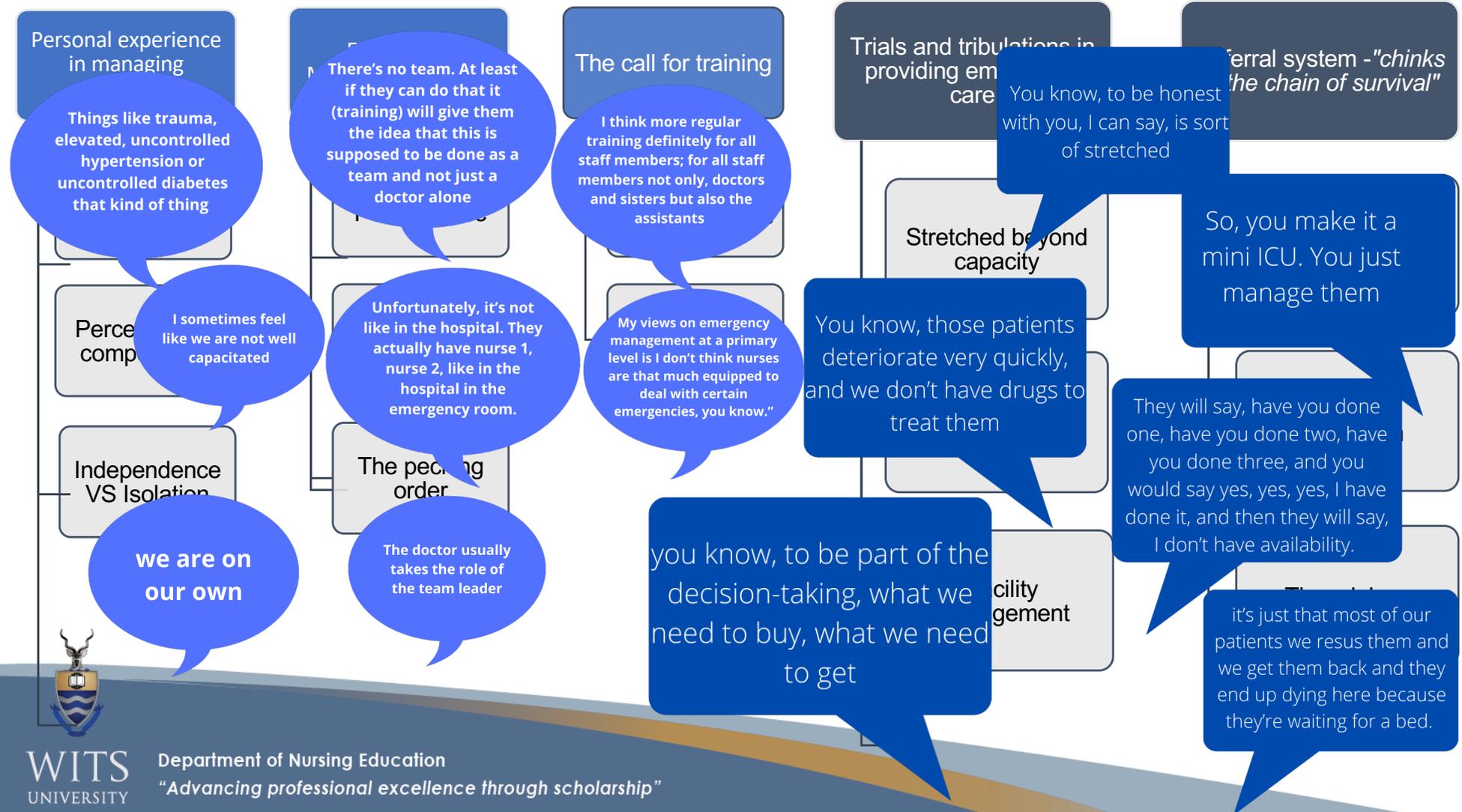
TWO MAJOR STREAMS OF RESULTS EMERGED:

- Themes related to Personal experiences of the health care professional
- Themes related to challenges on the system of emergency care at a PHC level



Personal Experiences

Systematic Challenges



CONCLUSION

- Strengthening emergency care at a PHC level protects the health care system by preventing the overload of higher-level facilities and provides the patient with efficient care at the frontline of health care access
- Clarification of health care practitioners' roles, as well as regular training and appropriate support for practitioners working at this level is vital to ensure that the first response to emergencies is effective, and to ensure that they do not feel isolated in their efforts to uphold the first line of care.
- There are numerous “kinks in the chain” of emergency care at a PHC level. This is evidenced by the poorly resourced emergency areas, and poorly allocated resources for emergency transport and transfers with a large emphasis on the shortages of staff in the facilities
- There is a need to review the policies and guidelines influencing and directing emergency care at the Primary Health Care level to establish inefficiencies and make recommendations for addressing the challenges within the system of care. These recommendations include the championing of emergency care at this level, calling for input from experts in the field and direction in the form of a carefully coordinated system of emergency care which addresses the kinks in the chain at every level of care



Thank you!



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