

Management Support, Role Ambiguity and Role Ambiguity among Professional Nurses at National Health Insurance Pilot Sites in South Africa: An Interpretive Phenomenology

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Abstract : The South African Primary Health Care (PHC) system has undergone a number of transformations such as the introduction of National Health Insurance (NHI) to bring about easily accessible universal health coverage and to meet the health needs for all its citizens. This provides ongoing challenges to ensure that health workers are equipped with appropriate knowledge, support, and skills to meet these changes. Therefore it is crucial to understand the experiences and challenges of nurses as the backbone of PHC in providing quality healthcare services. In addition there has been a need to understand nurses' experiences with management support, role ambiguity and role conflict amongst other challenges in light of the current reforms in healthcare. Indeed these constructs are notorious for having a detrimental impact on the outcomes of change initiatives within any organisation, this is no different in healthcare. This draws a discussion on professional nurses within the South African health care system especially since they have been labelled as the backbone of PHC, meaning any healthcare backlog falls on them. The study made use of semi-structured interviews and adopted the interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA) as the researcher aimed to explore the lived experiences of (n= 18) participants. The study discovered that professional nurses experienced a lack of management support within PHC facilities and that management mainly played an administrative and disciplinary role. Although participants mainly held positive perceptions with regards to changes happening in health care however they also expressed negative experiences in terms of how change initiatives were introduced resulting in role conflict and role ambiguity. Participants mentioned a shortage of staff, inadequate training as well as a lack of management support as some of the key challenges faced in facilities. This study offers unique findings as participants have not only experienced the various reforms within the PHC system however they have also been part of NHI pilot. The authors are not aware of any other studies published that examine management support, role conflict and role ambiguity together especially in South African PHC facilities. In conclusion understanding these challenges may provide insight and opportunities available to improve the current landscape of PHC not only in South Africa but internationally.

Keywords : management support, professional nurse, role ambiguity, role conflict

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