

Oral Abstracts

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NURSES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS SUICIDE AND DELIBERATE SELF-HARM IN RURAL SRI LANKA: A STUDY FORM RURAL PART OF NORTH WESTERN PROVINCE

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Objectives: The aim of the present study was to explore the attitudes and experiences of nurses' in rural primary care hospitals towards Suicide and Deliberate self-harm (SDSH)

Methods: This was a hospital based ethnographic study; conducted in the North Western Province of Sri Lanka. Four focus group discussions, Thirty three semi-structured in-depth interviews with nurses and observations was conducted in rural primary care hospitals, selected using purposive sampling method. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis.

Results: Overall nurses showed relatively positive and favorable attitudes towards SDSH patients as well as they didn't discriminate them from other patients. They reported positive feelings such as sympathy, compassion, supporting, understanding, sadness, and worrying. Few nurse had unfavorable attitudes towards SDSH considering them weak in personality, mentally ill, or attention seeking. Also those who had negative feelings saw the 'wrongful behavior' as a results of rural people's low educational level, making people 'uneducated' on how to make good life decisions and solving problems without refraining to SDSH. As the nurses lived in the local rural community, they felt they had insight into SDSH in rural Sri Lanka. They perceived as a reaction to local major socio-economic problems including: unemployment, unstable incomes and poverty. The following risk factors for SDSH were identified: 1. Agricultural challenges and failures for males. 2. Domestic violence, abuse and female migration for women. 3. Dependency, isolation and feeling worthless for elders. 4. Child abuse was considered as a serious social problem, disturbed interpersonal relationships, unreturned love for youth.

Conclusion: Nurses frequently encounter SDSH patients in rural hospitals and therefore must be aware of their attitudes towards this group of patients as a part of their professional and therapeutic role. The perceived need for formal training of mental health counseling for the patients was strongly identified among these rural nurses. Nurses need to be better prepared with regard to mental health counseling and should be enhanced by providing further specific trainings. These trainings should be included with developing skills and favorable attitudinal changes towards SDSH patients.