INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN NURSING PRACTICE IN AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

Innovation can be thought of as taking two things that already exist and putting them together in a new way.

CHALLENGES.

HEALTH CARE IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD (THIRD WORLD)

About 80 percent of people in developing countries rely on local health care for health care. This is often in the form of ill-equipped clinics and local healers. There are no ambulances or 911 numbers. People often have to walk, sometimes for days, to get to a decent clinic or hospital. People with medical problems often can do nothing about them because they can't afford medicine or a visit to the doctor.

Many people don't practice rudimentary disease prevention measures such as keeping water covered, washing vegetables, brushing teeth, vaccinating children, taking the garbage away from the house and screening windows against flies and mosquitos

TECHNOLOGY DRIVEN INNOVATIONS

What Africa can teach the world even though it often seems that nurses in Africa work against insurmountable odds, it is very important to realize that Africa does in fact have some lessons to teach the world regarding innovation in nursing education and practice.

In Africa it is often a daily struggle and challenge to be a nurse and to carry out nursing care within such a resource constrained environment. The lack of relevant resources can make nursing care a very complex task; however, Africa does teach one to be creative and resourceful.
The nurse in Africa has to find ways to "make do" and to find ways around a particular obstacle; this requires the nurses to be creative with less or to devise ways to get the job done with what is available.

Historically we have had very little solid real-time disease surveillance and monitoring data on Africa, and as such have had to rely upon a few sentinel sites and modeling estimates to track the spread and prevalence of disease. As a nursing student who has spent some time with practitioners in Nigeria I can tell you this is extremely frustrating. You can see all the evidence around you, but in most places there is no infrastructure to monitor and evaluate it. Since then it has been clear to me that one of the biggest obstacles to improving the lives of the world's poorest people is the ability to accurately measure in real time the burden of ill-health. Because if we can't measure it, how can we do anything about it?

Cell phones are changing that. For the first time we are seeing good quality data that can tell us who

is dying and from what, who is sick, and where clusters of disease are occurring. By removing the guesswork, this information has huge potential to inform global and national health strategies. Nigeria in the 1980s, I can tell you this is extremely frustrating. You can see all the evidence around you, but you can't do anything about it.

Smartphone technology is also aiding patient management as well. iWander is an app that monitors Alzheimer's patients through a small GPS tracking device. iWander involves a discrete monitoring device located in a watch which can, upon evaluation, provide several different courses of action from directing the patient home to performing a group call to emergency services and the caregiver.

In the Tanzanian village of Shirati, Dr. Buire Changi, chief medical officer, with a retinue of nurses are in charge of a 200-bed hospital. He frequently diagnoses skin conditions such as Kaposi's sarcoma and candidiasis in HIV positive patients. Despite his experience, Dr. Changi may need a second physician to confirm his findings. His patients need to be triaged and some referred to a larger hospital. The decision to seek a second opinion is crucial. If Dr. Changi chooses to refer the patient, it is an expensive five-hour bus journey to the Mwanza regional hospital.
He uses First Derm, a mobile app that enables him to use a smartphone-connected dermatoscope to take photographs of his patient's skin lesions. These photos are then reviewed by a consultant in Dar es Salaam and the patients are triaged. Though the patients may still have an uncomfortable five-hour journey to Mwanza, they are referred with confidence that the journey is worth the discomfort.