

The CCSSA Critical Care Nursing Forum

The Critical Care Nursing Forum was formally established as a sub-structure of the Critical Care Society of Southern Africa (CCSSA) at a Council meeting chaired by Professor Andrew Argent in June 2007. This was to address a need expressed by South African critical care nurses (CCNs) for a credible and legitimate body of CCNs in southern Africa that would address CCN matters in a constructive way.

Executive Committee members of the Forum were nominated by CCSSA members according to regional representation as described in the 2007 CCSSA Constitution. Criteria included that these nominees be CCNs in all fields and disciplines who were active members of CCSSA. Other CCNs on the CCSSA Council who were involved with the World Federation of Critical Care Nurses (WFCCN) and the Clinical Trials Group (CTG) were also included as members of the Forum.

Objectives

The objectives of the Forum were briefly to:

1. Function under the auspices of the CCSSA and the Society's Constitution
2. Develop a philosophy
3. Develop a strategic plan of action
4. Set up task teams related to critical care nursing, such as education, research, management and clinical practice
5. Identify interested South African CCNs – add names to a database of members
6. Identify individual focus areas – expert nurses who could work on specific projects
7. Identify regional groups aligned to local CCSSA branches
8. Disseminate information related to critical care events, conferences, regional news, position statements, guidelines and other relevant documents for comment or distribution.

Philosophy

The South African CCN Forum is a group of CCNs dedicated to the promotion of excellence in critical care nursing in South Africa and the delivery of quality care to the critically ill patient through the promotion of education, research, evidence-based practice and multidisciplinary collaboration.

Aims of the group

1. To support critical care nursing management initiatives to improve CCN management and working conditions
2. To enhance the professional image of CCNs
3. To promote the interests of CCNs in South Africa
4. To communicate at a local, national and international level regarding CCN issues
5. To provide a legitimate, credible voice for South African CCNs
6. To provide leadership, representation and support.

The process

Since 2007 the objectives have been achieved, and regular meetings have been held at the annual critical care congresses and refresher courses. Regular feedback was provided to both the CCSSA Council and membership via written reports and oral presentations at both annual conferences and local branch meetings. In addition, a strategic planning meeting was held, followed up by workshops at regular intervals, with the purpose of advancing South African critical care nursing through our voice of influence, and contributing to critical care clinical nursing practice, management, research, education and policy at all levels.

The process identified a particular need for education and training, and the Outreach Programme was developed through which various forms of outreach activities were initiated. Sponsorship for this programme was sought by the current President of the CCSSA, Professor Mervyn Mer, from Fresenius Kabi SA. In addition Fresenius Kabi have been instrumental in facilitating the development of training materials for educational workshops offered throughout South Africa by CCN Forum members in their specific regions, in collaboration with expert CCNs.

Forum outreach activities

Outreach activities focus on making critical care nursing research accessible in order to facilitate best nursing practice in the care of the critically ill patient. The intention is to provide critical care nurses with support to develop skills that can be used to continue practice development at the bedside, increasing participation in and commitment to the best possible patient care. A further aim is to foster collegiality among critical care nurses.

These activities include:

1. Fresenius Kabi workshops: nutrition and feeding, intravenous fluid therapy, intravenous medication and administration in the ICU
2. Multidisciplinary workshops/discussion sessions specific to identified needs in particular geographical areas in collaboration with additional sponsorship from Astra-Zeneca and Roche
3. Journal clubs
4. Nursing care-focused ward rounds
5. Annual CCN Forum 'Credible Voice' sessions at each conference.

The way forward

The Forum is now established and presenting regular educational activities. The problems associated with the nursing shortage crisis have been highlighted, and the way forward is to focus on the following:

1. Involvement in discussions with the South African Nursing Council (SANC) regarding critical care nursing education
2. Involvement in discussions with the CCSSA Council and the Minister of Health

3. Increased representation on representative bodies such as the Forum of University Deans in South Africa (FUNDISA), the WFCCN, and at local CCSSA branches
4. Increased visibility at conferences, including those with similar interests such as the International Council of Nurses (ICN), Nursing Education Association (NEA) and Emergency Medicine Society of South Africa (EMSSA)
5. Improvement of links with societies such as the Emergency Nurses Society of South Africa (ENSSA), paediatrics and neonatology
6. Promotion of opportunities to be involved in quality improvement initiatives such as the Best Care Campaign
7. Active promotion of research to improve practice development
8. Active involvement in education and training initiatives of CCNs
9. Dissemination of information and resources via the CCSSA website
10. Continuing to provide regular feedback to CCSSA Council and members.

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