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Professional nurses’ views regarding the care of HIV and AIDS patients in hospitals in Vhembe district, Limpopo province, South Africa

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Background: HIV and AIDS are increasing rapidly in Africa with South Africa being one of the countries with a high incidence of the disease and highest number of people on ante-retroviral treatment. People who are infected need to be cared for by nurses in hospital until their condition is satisfactory or they are discharged from the ward. The way health care professional's view patient with HIV and AIDSs can determine the quality of care that professional nurses provide to patients with the disease.

Aim & Methods: A qualitative, exploratory and descriptive study was conducted with the purpose of exploring and describing the views of professional nurses towards caring for HIV and AIDS patients in hospitals in Vhembe district in Limpopo province. The study population consisted of professional nurses who have undergone HIV and AIDS related courses or training in the three hospitals in Vhembe district of Limpopo province. Participants and wards were purposively selected and convenient sampling was used to selected participants for focus group. Semi-structured interviews, focus group interview and key informant interviews were conducted and a guide was followed throughout the interview.

Results: Professional nurses caring for HIV and AIDS patients expressed the fact that HIV is no longer a dangerous disease due to the availability antiretroviral treatment while on the other side professional nurses now understand HIV and treat it like any other general medical condition such as hypertension. The attitudes of professional nurses were found to be positive and their perceptions good towards HIV positive patients in hospitals. Data analysis revealed that professional nurses have positive attitudes and perceptions towards HIV and AIDS patients in hospitals where patients are being provided with nursing care that is of quality from nurses.

Conclusions: Suggested solutions included that nurses need to be supported in all ways by their supervisors. This will include mentoring and establishing support groups for nurses caring for HIV and AIDS patients to ensure that quality care is continuously provided to HIV positive patients in the hospital.

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