



Building Children's Nursing for Africa Conference 2017: 'Pillars of Practice'

A participative conference for neonatal, paediatric and paediatric critical care nurses to celebrate and build on what nurses do well in caring for children and their families.

Conference highlights from day two

Our keynote speakers for day two have both achieved a transfer of knowledge and professional expertise across higher and lower resourced settings, to the enrichment of both.

Just start speaking up

In telling us her wonderfully personal story of her time applying her health visiting skills in a rural area in the Gambia, **Karen Hoare** gave us an inspiring insight into responding to need in challenging circumstances. In particular, the progress that Karen was able to make with her colleagues in this setting shows us the value of perseverance, even in the face of discouragement. Moving on to chart her personal and professional story in the context of world events and the development of global health policy, including the Millennium Development Goals, Karen vividly illustrated a key message from day one – seizing opportunity. It is notable that at every point in Karen's varied working life, she has created opportunities to engage with children to achieve health-enhancing dialogue within and between communities – and has turned the insights this generated into powerful data. Karen left us with a memorable message: You can only achieve the impossible by asking children, because they don't know it can't be done. Having shown us in such a down to earth way the extraordinary and courageous journey she has undertaken, often taking her well outside of her personal comfort zone, Karen's address was concluded perfectly when the 2017 PGDip students treated us to a flashmob performance of the theme song for this year's conference, Sarah Bareilles's song *Brave*.

A passion for culture change

Prof Jean Johnson, speaking about the role of nurses in managing health care risk, shared some of the patient stories that had motivated her to keep going in the quest to mobilise nurses to improve health care quality. Quality of care will not change until nurses – the backbone of the health care system in both the US and Africa – get fully on board with quality improvement. A significant development in the field of quality and safety improvement is that best clinical evidence must be integrated with clinical expertise and patient-family preferences regarding the delivery of healthcare. In keeping with this, nurses need to work as a full part of the multidisciplinary team addressing quality and safety – and that team includes the patient and family as a full partner in care. Embracing patients and families as the source of control in health care interactions and decision making represents a major challenge to established health care culture in the US, and Prof Johnson recognized that many delegates in African settings may have learning to share about effective family involvement.



Poster presentations

The poster presentations, as Candice Bonaconsa reminded us, are another way for nurses to express their bravery. Presenting professional practice and evidence to our peers requires courage, and we applaud all the delegates presenting posters at this conference, especially those making their first presentation at an academic conference.

We must never forget we are nursing a child

Moving into the afternoon, we heard and saw more examples of the ways that nurses and allied professionals are responding to the challenges of exercising leadership, including a joyful video demonstration of holistic therapy, reminding us that partnering with the public includes mothers, grandmothers and of course the children themselves. Other sessions demonstrated the necessity for us as nurses to apply an integrated approach to caring for the whole child and family, with presentations on nutritional support, and psychosocial and emotional support, demonstrating how children's nurse leaders are seamlessly integrating these elements of care in their settings. Even in high acuity situations, and in the face of complex needs, "we must never forget", Pam Hansford said, "that we are nursing a child".

Simons restaurant at Groot Constantia was the setting for the conference dinner, and Cape Town treated delegates to the best of what it has to offer, with the sunset turning the vineyards and mountains to pink and then to gold, before a memorable celebratory evening with great food, dancing and singing.