



Building Children’s Nursing for Africa conference 2019: ‘Constructs of Care’

A participative conference for nurses who work with children, newborns to adolescents, and their families, to consider and celebrate their contribution to excellence in care

Daily summary of DAY ONE

Tuesday 16th April

This year is the fourth biennial Building Children’s Nursing conference, and with 118 delegates from eight countries this year’s participation represents the largest gathering of children’s nurses, service leaders and educators in Africa. As conference co-chairs Associate Professor Minette Coetzee (Child Nurse Practice Development Initiative Director) and Mrs Mitzi Franken (Director of Nursing, Red Cross War Memorial Children’s Hospital) welcomed delegates and highlighted the wish of the organisers that the conference should involve conversation and participation, helped by the round table ‘café style’ seating. Delegates were treated to a performance from the Herschel Girls’ School Chorale, who sang four short songs in isiXhosa, isiZulu and English chosen to highlight the themes of love, dedication, and childhood.

Professor Lis Lange gave the opening address. The University of Cape Town aspires to be not simply a university that is situated *in* the African continent, but a university that is *for* Africa. Prof. Lange applauded the achievements of delegates in collaboration with the University of Cape Town in building children’s nursing in Africa together. Prof. Lange shared a quotation from Hannah Arendt: “Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it ... and where we decide whether we love our children enough ... to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world.”



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Our first plenary address was made by Mrs Tulipoka Soko, National Director of Nursing and Midwifery for Malawi. Mrs Soko outlined the vision for strengthening children's nursing capacity in Malawi, saying that: "In building children's nursing we are building the foundations that will shape the future population". Mrs Soko also offered reflections on leading in children's health service delivery, highlighting the role that the nursing leader makes between the challenges facing the country, the organisation, the community, and the profession. In conclusion, Mrs Soko reminded us that "we need to support nurses as essential actors in the healthcare workforce".

Then our second plenary speaker, Professor Bernie Carter of Edge Hill University in England spoke about leading the care of children and families. Prof. Carter used stories from her life to illustrate a personal leadership journey which has guided her towards two important realisations. Prof. Carter described how "caring for children is an endless series of opportunities for each of us to make their lives better". Prof. Carter also challenged us to consider that "Children's todays are just as important as their tomorrows".

Delegates then participated in the first of a number of round table guided conversations, reaping the benefits of the café style seating arrangement chosen for this year's conference to encourage discussion and foster connections

The day's second plenary session took the form of collaborative presentations from Dr Ben Kagina of the University of Cape Town's Vaccines for Africa initiative, and Dr Nina Power of the Child Nurse Practice Development Initiative. Dr Power outlined a project to develop a suite of evidence based practice protocols for children's nurses in Africa, and Dr Kagina located this work within the context of the urgent need to develop Afrocentric knowledge to guide clinical practice in paediatrics.

Daily summary of DAY TWO

Wednesday 17th April

An early start was made easier by a perfect autumn morning. Events got off to a quick start with Mr Bronson Hlatshwayo from Mandate Molefi who delivered an enlivening presentation titled 'Diversity is strength'. Mr Hlatshwayo used humour and scientific evidence to help us think about some uncomfortable challenges we face in our work. Mr Hlatshwayo advocated that progress begins with being willing to recognise, reflect on and reconstruct our own attitudes to difference.



The second plenary session took the form of a conversation between leaders. Ms Nadia Harris and Mrs Busisiwe Jama (current Masters students at UCT) interviewed Mrs Mitzi Franken, Director of Nursing at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital, Cape Town and - in the absence of Mrs Bawinile Ndlovu, who was unable to be present – delegates also contributed to the conversation, drawing on their own leadership insights. A clear theme of the conversation was that children's nurses have a pivotal role in leading child health services, and effective leadership can transform healthcare.

The third plenary speaker of the morning was Associate Professor Minette Coetzee, Director of the Child Nurse Practice Development Initiative. A/Prof. Coetzee explored the 'Science of Better Together', providing a strong scientific bridge between the personal experiences of leadership recounted during the first two sessions, and showing how neuropsychophysiology is fundamental to child growth, development and health.

After lunch, the afternoon was devoted to a lively and interactive World café event, the theme for which was 'Making nurses value visible'. Constant movement between tables required a lot of good humour and nimbleness on the part of delegates as participants worked to construct care outcome statements articulating the contribution that children's nurses make to care. The resulting statements and the graphic record will be shared with participants, who will have the opportunity to comment prior to finalisation of the statements. Contributions will be acknowledged when this work is reported.

The celebratory conference dinner at Moyo restaurant, Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens was an opportunity for delegates to relax and enjoy great food, outstanding company and fabulous music and dancing.

Daily summary of DAY THREE

Thursday 18th April

Mrs Tulipoka Soko outlined her vision for 'Specialist children's nurses' contributions to health service delivery', focusing on the distinctive role that specialist children's nurses play in a primary health care framework. Children's nurses contribute at many levels, in relation to leadership and management, patient care, education and research. "When somebody has had specialist training, they have a special touch, they have a special way of managing with what they have", said Mrs Soko.

Natasha North, Research Programme Director for the Child Nurse Practice Development Initiative, presented her research into the children's nursing workforce. In a presentation titled 'Children's nurses in Africa – a growing community. Reporting on an initial workforce survey', Natasha highlighted that there are currently around 260 new children's nurses are qualifying each year across southern and eastern Africa, adding to a workforce which currently stands at around 3 600. Plans are in hand to conduct annual workforce surveys.

Professor Andrew Argent, Head of the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health at the University of Cape Town, invited delegates to consider 'How do we thrive in this work...together?'. In a thoughtful and wide-ranging presentation, Prof. Argent drew on learning from the field of patient safety research to explore how we can support each other to work in high performing multi-disciplinary teams to deliver quality care for children.

Mrs Busiswe Jama led delegates in singing as we celebrated the growing community we are part of. In closing the conference, A/Prof. Minette Coetzee described the joy of bringing together a real community, who certainly are 'Stronger Together'. Our community of children's nurses is not just one community, and the conference has been an opportunity for many communities to come together. Delegates have been present as the representatives of their communities: the communities of children's nurses, service leaders and educators where we make your contributions, in our countries, and our institutions. A/Prof. Coetzee asked delegates to commit to taking a message back to these communities – "Children's nursing is growing'. Delegates were asked to pledge to hold a conversation with stakeholders (national, region/province/facility/ward) about how children's nursing will continue to grow from here.