

#NursesCount: the fifth 'Building Children's Nursing for Africa' conference is a virtual success

'For whom must African nursing knowledge count?' A thought-provoking question and the perfect way to kick-start this year's Building Children's Nursing conference. The only event of its kind in Africa, with over 100 registered delegates, on 23rd June 2021, nursing and leadership professionals from 12 different countries came together to consider and celebrate what counts in the excellent nursing care of our continent's children and their families.

"Children are different from adults anatomically, physiologically, developmentally, emotionally, and legally... As such, they need to be managed by well-trained child health nurses. It is also important that we develop African solutions for children's nursing education in Africa."

Tulipoka Soko, Former Director of Nursing & Midwifery, Ministry of Health Malawi

Hosted by Senior Research Officer, Natasha North, and course alumna Busisiwe Jama, delegates were guided through a carefully thought-out programme that explored the use of nursing data, children's nursing education, and the role of African nursing knowledge. Streaming from Malawi and South Africa, keynotes included Tulipoka Soko and Maureen Majamanda, along with the University of Cape Town's Professor Elelwani Ramugondo and Children's Nursing Development Unit Director, Minette Coetzee.

The event also gave young and upcoming researchers the chance to share their work, with concurrent rooms hosting a series of abstract presentations selected by the team's Scientific Review Committee. Noluyolo Ngomani, Station Manager at RX Radio wowed the crowd with her presentation on 'The power of the mic and intergenerational dialogue' and was rightly awarded 'Best Abstract Presentation'. Yevonnie Chauraya and Elijeshca Crous also placed, showcasing work that explored factors contributing to needle stick injuries in Zimbabwe, and the development of evidence-based guidelines for children's nurses in South Africa.

Complemented by a series of short narratives capturing individual thoughts on the theme 'Nurses Count', the event invited - and created - a much-needed space for personal reflection, as well as shared learning and discussion. The virtual format didn't dampen the mood as questions poured in from speakers and delegates alike. Amidst all the discussion, the role and need for nursing data, and an Afro-centric evidence base from which guidelines and best practices can grow, emerged as key takeaways for the day. So too did the need to work in harmony, take a multidisciplinary approach, share learning and experiences, and develop a mutually supportive community of practice. Nurses have a voice, and we must come together to make sure it is heard. Because African nursing knowledge counts. Not just for individual children, but for the families, communities and societies they are part of. Unapologetically excellent and unapologetically African, together we can show the world exactly why we're here.

"with love.. Colleagues, I believe that this is the way to do nursing work, nursing education, nursing research for an African knowledge that will count on the continent but also globally, for all of us in society."

Professor Elelwani Ramugondo, Post Graduate Education Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Cape Town