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Selected features of nurses' occupational health and safety practice in three Free State provincial public hospitals

CITATION

Van Rensburg A, Engelbrecht MC, Yassi A, Nophale LE, Bryce E & Spiegel JM. 2016. Selected features of nurses' occupational health and safety practice in three Free State provincial public hospitals. *Occupational Health Southern Africa*, 22(2): 8-14.

ABSTRACT

Background: Despite growing research, knowledge about nurses' occupational health and safety status, and engagement with occupational health and safety (OHS), services remain sparse.

Objectives: The aim of this research was to explore the OHS of nurses in three Free State hospitals, focusing on OHS related training, vaccinations and work examinations, OHS-related practices, nurses' engagement with hospital-based management, OHS services, and health and safety representatives.

Methods: A cross-sectional baseline survey was conducted among Free State public hospitals. Data were collected from a sample of 363 nurses, using self-administered questionnaires.

Results: One-fifth (22.3%) of nurses had experienced sharps injuries; vaccination rates were low; and 69.0% had not been screened for tuberculosis at work. A large proportion (38.5%) of nurses reported always recapping needles (a hazardous process). One-quarter (24.9%) never wore N95 respirators when required. The majority (89.8%) were aware of the procedure for contacting the occupational health services but 27.5% did not know how to report an occupational injury or disease.

Conclusion: The study highlights the precarious working contexts of nursing in Free State hospitals, adding to a growing body of knowledge on public hospital OHS in low-to-middle income countries.