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The perceptions and perspectives of patients and healthcare providers on chronic diseases management in rural South Africa: a qualitative study

CITATION

Maimela E, Van Geertruyden JP, Alberts M, Modjadji SEP, Meulemans H, Fraeyman J & Bastiaens H. 2015. The perceptions and perspectives of patients and healthcare providers on chronic diseases management in rural South Africa: a qualitative study. *BMC Health Services Research*, 15: 143. DOI: 10.1186/s12913-015-0812-5

ABSTRACT

Background: Preventive healthcare represents the future for healthcare delivery in South Africa to improve management of chronic diseases, as this has been implemented for some time in several countries to tackle the increasing burden of chronic diseases. An individual person's health is unique; as they move in and out of chronic and acute healthcare phases, there is a need to integrate chronic and acute care constructs to improve continuity of care, maximise health and improve well-being. The aim of this study was to determine the perceptions and perspectives of chronic patients' and nurses regarding chronic disease management in terms of barriers, facilitators, and their experiences.

Methods: To meet our aim we used qualitative methods involving the collection of information by means of focus-group discussions in Dikgale Health and Demographic Surveillance System (HDSS). All data was recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed using data-driven thematic analysis.

Results: Our study showed that chronic disease patients have a first contact with healthcare professionals at the primary healthcare level in the study area. The main barriers mentioned by both the healthcare workers and chronic disease patients are:

- lack of knowledge on chronic diseases,
- shortage of medication, and
- shortage of nurses in the clinics which causes patients to wait for a long periods in a clinic.

Healthcare workers are poorly trained on the management of chronic diseases. Lack of supervision by the district and provincial health managers, together with poor dissemination of guidelines has been found to be a contributing factor to lack of knowledge in nurses among the clinics within the study area. Both patients and nurses mentioned the need to involve community health workers and traditional healers, and to integrate their services in order to detect chronic diseases early and manage them in the community.

Conclusion: Nurses and chronic disease patients mentioned similar barriers to chronic disease management. Concerted action is needed to strengthen the delivery of medications at the clinics, improve the chronic disease knowledge for both nurses and patients by conducting in-service

trainings or workshops, increase the involvement of community health workers, and establish a link (through a formal referral system) with traditional healers.