



## **Building Children's Nursing for Africa Conference: 22–24 April 2015**

**A participative conference for neonatal, paediatric and paediatric critical care nurses to celebrate and build best practice of nurses in caring for children and their families**

### **Summary report of the whole conference: Nurses to 'speak up' to effect positive change**

"I made it through that time because the nurses were there for me," recounts twelve year old Tarique Kenny, regarding his long-term illness, at the opening of the second Building Children's Nursing (BCN) for Africa Conference in Cape Town this week. With the overarching theme of 'Foundations for Evidence', the BCN conference has an undertone of thanking nurses for their hard work, while at the same time encouraging positive change in patient healthcare.

Roughly 140 delegates from all over South Africa and 13 other countries from around the world are in attendance at the BCN conference. Here, nurses, academics and researchers not only have opportunity to share their experiences with child healthcare, but also to encourage positive change in healthcare practices.

"We can change our style to create positive experiences for both parents and children," says Sarah Neill (pictured above, right), an Associate Professor of Children's Nursing from the University of Northampton and one of the keynote speakers of the conference. Indeed, this quote captures the essence of the conference, which is described as "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".

The conference, which takes place from Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April to Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April, is hosted by the Child Nurse Practice Development Initiative and the University of Cape Town in collaboration with the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital (RCWMCH). The first day mainly focused on encouraging nurses to find their voices and 'speak up' in order to effect positive changes in their healthcare environment. Certainly, clinicians were encouraged to be 'advocates across the continuum of care for users' – as Karen Hermanus (pictured above, middle), the Strategic Planning & Co-ordination for the Western Cape Department of Health, claims: "It's not just about cure, it's about [all-round] health and well-being."

However, even though there were plenty of upbeat and positive attitudes and messages, the speakers were also realistic about the difficulties of effecting change. Heide Kunzmann from RCWMCH claims that "it's always easy implementing ideas on paper, but in reality it's a different story." But at the same time, she also believes that practitioners do need to push forward with those ideas regardless, so that any potential positive outcomes can be seen and reviewed for evidence-based practice. Clare Davis from the Child Nurse Practice Development Initiative claims that certain challenges to implementing change should actually be anticipated. "The process of making change takes time," she says when discussing the issues of implementing new practices, "and this should be embraced."

Nurses have not only been encouraged to 'find their voices' and be advocates for bettering children's healthcare practices, but they have also been tasked with creating innovative methods for pushing forward and implementing positive changes, despite any challenges they may face.

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