

Universal Precautions in the Community: Nurses’ and Midwives’ views and practices

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Malta

Session 3C

12/3/2010

The protection for nurse and midwives from contracting any blood or body fluid borne infections is an important issue in their daily practice. Universal precautions are a set of guidelines aimed at protecting health care workers from such infections, while protecting patients from cross infections. Community nurses and midwives have to deliver care to people outside the acute hospital setting, probably in less than ideal home conditions compromising their ability of adhering with universal precautions. This study sets to explore nurses’ and midwives’ views and practices on universal precautions.

A self administered questionnaire was conveniently distributed to 37 community nurses and midwives from the Malta Memorial District Nursing Association. From a response rate of 75%, findings indicate that the majority of respondents seem to have a good knowledge of universal precautions and implement them in their daily practices. Conversely, they face difficulties in being compliant mainly because of poor hygienic conditions in homes. A worrying finding is that more than half of the respondents (n=15) suffered a needle stick injury with only four of them reporting the actual incident.

Further education for patients and relatives on the importance of infection control in the community is highly recommended. Furthermore, support from higher authorities is recommended for such nurses and midwives, in securing adequate facilities to improve their compliance towards universal precautions.