

Paradigm shifting in postgraduate nursing education in Ethiopia: a move from classroom-based lecture to hospital-based evidence-based learning by doing at St. Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College

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Princess Tsehai became Ethiopia's first national nurse in 1939(1). Certain sources indicate that the first Ethiopian nurses were trained abroad in 1944. Nursing training in Ethiopia began in 1949 in Addis Ababa by the Red Cross Society at the then Haile-Selassie I Hospital (now Yekatit 12 Hospital), which produced the first graduates in 1953(1). The Haile Selassie I Public Health College was established in 1954 in Gondar, where community nurses' training began in Ethiopia (2). Nursing education in Ethiopia has been at the lower level (diploma) since 1949 and at the post-basic level since 1994. Diploma graduates were expected to perform more varied and complex nursing tasks at any level and in settings that require strong educational backgrounds and competency (2).

Nurses play an indispensable role in improving health care standards. However, limited exposure in clinical practice settings hinders nurse professional development. In line with this, studies reported that newly graduated nurses are not well prepared to handle complex clinical patient situations (3) which capitalized the need for educational institutions to develop curricula with pedagogic approaches that promote students' actual learning of clinical skills, clinical reasoning skills, and the ability to apply knowledge to solve patient problems in practice (3, 4). To fill these gaps, a student-active and problem-based pedagogic approach that develops the student's clinical reasoning skills and enhances their readiness for solving patient problems in clinical settings. Globally, nursing education trends have been towards greater professionalization through increasing training periods and shifting from class room based lecture to hospital-based evidence based learning by doing (3).

The existing Nursing teaching practices in many higher education institutions in Ethiopia do not take into account the needs of the important strategies of learning. As opposed to this, the world is moving from pedagogy to an andragogy teaching strategy. In this approach, the

nursing residency program has been enhancing the 21st-century adult learning strategies, such as student-centered coaching, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning, and the teacher as a facilitator model of instruction (5, 6).

A nursing residency program is a program that combines classroom instruction specific to the nursing specialty with clinical experience under the supervision and guidance of preceptors, coaches, and the program director (3). It is reported that the Nurse Residency Program (NRP) contributes to producing highly trained nurses with a substantial focus on patient safety by providing the opportunity for nursing residents to gain "real world" experience in the care setting and also supports the nurses in their development as confident and competent practitioners (7). Furthermore, the positive effect of the nursing education approach that involves precepting and practical orientation programs in assisting the recruitment and retention of new graduate nurses in perioperative settings has been described (4). Assessment of ten years outcomes of a post-baccalaureate new graduate nurse residency program also documented objective evidence about the benefits of Nurse residency programs (NRPs) to Hospitals and patient cares (5). In this study report, it is described that retention rates for new graduates in the residency program increased significantly, with residents showing an increase in organization, communication, and clinical leadership (5). Considering the benefits of the nursing residency program approach described in the global literature (5, 8, 9), it is high time for Higher educational institutions in Ethiopia to consider a transition from classroom lectures to a hospital-based learning approach to produce graduates capable of offering the best nursing care for the public in Ethiopia (6).

St. Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College, School of Nursing has taken the first step to move from the traditional classroom-based lecture to a hospital-based residency approach in postgraduate nursing training.

The program follows a hands-on learning strategy where the students also take responsibility for patients' care independently to some level which helps nurses to become fully competent with the transition from a student nurse to independent practicing nurse and a bedside leader (9, 10). Understanding this, the school has already implemented a new paradigm of nursing residence curricula in Neonatal Nursing, Critical care Nursing, and Oncology Nursing since 2022. The feedback and experience gained from this first batch of graduates would have an indispensable benefit to shape the future of the residency program in Ethiopia. As this residence approach curriculum focuses on patient safety, allowing nurses to gain "real-world" experience in the nursing setting and supporting their confidence and professional development, the contribution to nursing profession development would also be high as it meets the current healthcare standards (8). This Nursing residence approach is the ideal situation to pool the resources of both academicians and nursing professionals in a clinical setting and enhance their clinical engagement with academia. It is also the perfect environment for combining academic and nursing resources in a clinical setting. St. Paul's Nursing School shared postgraduate nursing residence approach implementation experience with 22 Universities in collaboration with the Ministry of education and health. The participating universities had strongly recommended that the government mark this initiation as a policy direction to establish a skill-based nursing training model that will serve as a prototype for the nation at St. Paul's to produce professionals who will render evidence-based best practices that will contribute to health care transformation.

In conclusion, Postgraduate nursing education in Ethiopia should be transformed into a nursing residence program approach by strengthening the initiatives of St. Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College's School of Nursing, and Addis Ababa University's School of Nursing. These initiatives can be scaled up and benchmarked to extend the nursing career pathway to Doctors of Nursing Practitioners in Ethiopia. Thus, the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health are recommended to develop a feasibility study research steering committee to generate evidence before full scale up resident nurses' curricula at the National level. This will ensure the evolution of nursing teaching and the professional standards of practice and career structure of residence nursing curriculum graduates.

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