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Proposed curriculum for veterinary nursing in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: Literature reveals that there are no trained veterinary nurses in Nigeria and nursing care in veterinary medicine is not well recognised. The role of veterinary nursing is significant, considering the need for people and animals to coexist in a healthy environment, and to prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases. In developed countries where the role of veterinary nurses is appreciated, they are involved in a wide range of care and treatment, providing skilled supportive care for sick animals and educating the owners on good standards of animal care. On this premise, the authors advocate the training of veterinary nurses in Nigeria.

Introduction

Developing a curriculum for a particular programme or for a discipline is based on the societal needs, relevance and availability of human and material resources. Available data has indicated the need for a curriculum in veterinary nursing in Nigeria. According to Okanlawon & Emikpe (2011) and Okanlawon, Emikpe & Ugwu (2011), the role of veterinary nursing in veterinary medicine is significant, considering the multitude of issues involved in the care of animals. Animals, like human beings, need good nursing care, particularly now that human beings and animals coexist so closely and the keeping of domestic animals has become a popular practice in many societies. Consequently, the spread of infectious diseases from animals to people is increasing, thereby creating a threat to both domestic animals and human health (World Economic Forum 2007).



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In developed countries, where nursing care in veterinary practice is well appreciated, veterinary nurses work alongside veterinary surgeons to provide a high standard of care for animals. Veterinary training began in Nigeria in 1962, but there are still no trained veterinary nurses in Nigeria. Some veterinary institutions in Nigeria and Ghana have what are called 'veterinary technicians' but they have no professional veterinary nurses.

Veterinary nursing is expected to be part of the integrated partnership in veterinary medicine as contained in the context of the 'One Health' principles (Kaplan, Kahn & Monath 2009). It is on this premise that the authors advocate the development of a curriculum for veterinary nursing in Nigeria, with the vision and hope of starting the training of veterinary nurses there.

Objectives of the proposed curriculum

The broad objective of this proposed curriculum is based on the belief that current healthcare demands require an innovative approach in professional preparation and a curriculum that is responsive to the changing health needs of society. It is believed that professional nursing education should be built on a theoretical base that will produce self-directed nurse practitioners who would



▲ Faculty of Veterinary Medicine

be able to provide nursing intervention to domestic animals and communities where people and animals coexist.

By the end of the proposed veterinary nursing training, the graduates of the programme would be expected to:

- provide the essential nursing care services to healthcare consumers – domestic animals, at primary, secondary and tertiary levels
- make use of nursing theories and concepts (e.g. nursing processes) in assisting owners to adapt to the changing health needs of their pets
- function efficiently, independently and in collaboration with other veterinary health colleagues in the care of patients
- provide supportive care to sick and injured animals
- perform minor surgical procedures
- educate animal owners about good standards of care and preventive medicine
- assist veterinary surgeons to monitor animals during anaesthesia.

Structure and requirements

The programme is proposed for all universities in Nigeria offering veterinary medicine. It will start as soon as it is approved by the senate of each university. The degree-level training will lead to the award of a Bachelor's degree to be denoted by the title BSc(Hons) in Veterinary Nursing. It will extend over a minimum of four years and instruction will be by both classroom tuition and clinical postings



▲ The veterinary teaching hospital

or laboratory placements. Admission to the programme will be through the Joint Matriculation Examination. Candidates must satisfy the prescribed minimum requirements for admission into degree programmes in Nigerian Universities as contained in the Nigerian University Commission (NUC) guidelines, i.e. Senior Secondary School Certificate or equivalent with credit in English Language, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

It will be a full-time programme delivered in course units. For the award of a degree, the average number of contact hours is 30 per session. All course units are to be taken and passed at a minimum of 50%. Class attendance will be compulsory and candidates must have a minimum 75% attendance record before they can sit an examination.

Students will be exposed to veterinary clinical postings (Industrial Training) for six months as a block from the second semester of third year through the three-month sessional break.

Assessment

Candidates will be assessed through formative and summative evaluation. Evaluation will be in the form of continuous assessment such as group presentation, home assignment, class tests, book/journal review and end-of-semester/end-of-session examinations.

Courses

Course units to be taken will include the following:

- Anatomy and physiology
- Medical nursing – covering general infectious diseases and systemic diseases, e.g. respiratory system, circulatory system, alimentary tract, urinary system
 - nursing of intensive care of animals
 - measuring blood pressure, temperature, heart rate
 - urinary catheterisation where necessary
- Surgical nursing – covering types of surgical diseases and principles of treatment as outlined by Moore & Simpson (1999)
 - pre- and post-operative nursing, methods of sterilisation, administration of intravenous fluid therapy and blood transfusions
 - anaesthetic techniques as indicated by Stanway & Morgan (1999)
 - theatre practice

- Veterinary nursing and the law both in Nigeria and within a global context
- Animal husbandry, animal handling, animal behaviour and animal therapy (College of Animal Welfare 2013)
- Pharmacology, nutrition, bandaging, pain management
- General nursing care – day-to-day management of hospitalised animals and keeping of nursing records
- Emergency nursing
- Use of nursing processes in the care of animals

Details of these courses will be provided in the course outlines to be prepared by the academic staff in various specialties. The academic staff will comprise qualified and experienced lecturers from both nursing and veterinary medicine.

Conclusion

Nigeria has 11 veterinary schools, yet professional veterinary nurses are not available to manage the nursing aspects of animal care. Most of the care is currently undertaken by animal technicians who cannot perform the job of professionally trained veterinary nurses. It is believed that the training of professional veterinary nurses in Nigeria will contribute significantly to improving the standard of animal care in veterinary institutions. ■

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