

Global Health Nursing and the Fight against Antimicrobial Resistance

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Description

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) is one of the most pressing challenges in global health today. It occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites evolve to resist the drugs designed to kill them, rendering standard treatments ineffective. This resistance leads to longer hospital stays, higher medical costs, and increased mortality rates. In the face of this crisis, nurses are playing a critical role in combating AMR. Global health nursing, with its focus on improving health outcomes through preventive care, education, and patient advocacy, is central to tackling AMR on a worldwide scale.

The role of global health nursing in combating AMR

Global health nursing encompasses a wide range of activities, from providing care in diverse cultural contexts to promoting health equity and improving access to healthcare. Nurses in this field are increasingly called upon to address antimicrobial resistance through direct patient care, education, and collaboration with public health initiatives. Nurses are often at the forefront of patient care, where they can directly influence antibiotic prescribing practices and ensure proper usage. They are in a unique position to educate patients on the appropriate use of antibiotics, explaining the importance of adhering to prescribed treatment regimens and discouraging self-medication. Nurses can help reduce unnecessary prescriptions by communicating effectively with physicians, ensuring that antibiotics are only prescribed when truly needed. Furthermore, nurses monitor patient progress, identify side effects or adverse reactions to antibiotics, and report these findings, contributing to better drug stewardship and minimizing the development of resistance. Global health nurses also play a pivotal role in infection prevention and control. In many regions, particularly low- and middle-income countries, healthcare settings are often under-resourced, leading to an increased risk of infections and the spread of resistant pathogens. Nurses in these settings implement and enforce infection control measures, such as proper hand hygiene, sterilization of medical equipment, and isolation protocols, all of which are essential in reducing the transmission of resistant microorganisms. They work closely with healthcare teams to ensure that guidelines are followed and provide direct care to patients to minimize the risk of healthcare-associated infections. Additionally, global health

nurses are involved in surveillance and data collection efforts aimed at tracking the spread of resistant pathogens. By collecting data on infection rates and resistance patterns, nurses contribute to broader public health efforts that inform policy decisions and guide treatment protocols. This surveillance is essential for identifying emerging threats and responding effectively to outbreaks of resistant infections.

Education and advocacy: Key strategies in the global fight against AMR

Education is a cornerstone of global health nursing's approach to AMR. Nurses not only educate patients but also engage in community outreach to raise awareness about the dangers of misuse and overuse of antibiotics. In many parts of the world, people may not fully understand the risks of antimicrobial resistance or may have misconceptions about the effectiveness of antibiotics. Nurses play a vital role in dispelling these myths and empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their health. Through community health programs, workshops, and educational materials, nurses help communities understand that antibiotics should not be used to treat viral infections, such as the common cold or flu, which do not respond to these drugs. In addition to patient and community education, global health nurses also advocate for policies and practices that promote responsible antimicrobial use. They work with governments, healthcare organizations, and international bodies to shape national and global policies on antibiotic use. For instance, global health nurses contribute to the development of antimicrobial stewardship programs that promote the rational use of antibiotics in both healthcare and agricultural settings. These programs are designed to ensure that antibiotics are prescribed only when necessary, at the correct doses, and for the appropriate duration. Global health nurses also advocate for stronger regulations and better funding for research into new antibiotics and alternative treatments. As resistant infections become more prevalent, the development of new drugs becomes essential. Nurses are instrumental in lobbying for policy changes that prioritize AMR research and development, working with advocacy groups to push for legislation that supports sustainable antibiotic use and funding for scientific advancements. In global health settings, where the burden of infectious diseases is often highest, nurses also advocate for the strengthening of healthcare systems to better prevent and

manage infectious diseases. This includes advocating for better access to clean water, sanitation, and vaccination programs, all of which help reduce the prevalence of infections and, consequently, the need for antibiotics. By strengthening

healthcare infrastructure and ensuring that essential health services are available, global health nurses contribute to the long-term goal of reducing the reliance on antibiotics and combating antimicrobial resistance.