

HFA Nurse Training Fellowship

Final Report

Fellow: Nina Kolbe

Fellowship period: August 2011 – August 2012

Research project: Sex counselling for patients with heart failure:
developing a practical and valid method for daily
practise

Institution: Linköping University, Sweden

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Tiny Jaarsma

Project of the fellowship: Sex counselling for patients with heart failure: developing a practical and valid method for daily practise

Content and aim of my fellowship

Patients with heart failure may experience problems with sexual activity as a result of their disease, medications or anxiety. They worry about resuming sexual activity and are in need of education and counselling. Nurses have an important role in supporting patients to live with the consequences of heart failure and can be expected to discuss patients' sexual concerns. However, these issues are seldom discussed with patients in daily practice. Accordingly, the aim of this study as part of the fellowship was to develop a practical and valid tool to help nurses in discussing sexual concerns.

Method of the project

We used the Medical Research Council framework to develop a complex intervention and proceeded step by step. Firstly, we reviewed relevant research results and identified two research gaps. Secondly, we conducted two studies with following aims: (1) to identify how and when patients would like to receive information and discuss sexual concerns and which role nurses could play, (2) to identify if nurses in German hospitals discuss the consequences of heart failure for sexuality and if not, why they do not address this issue.

Results of the project

Nurses do not feel adequately prepared to discuss sexual concerns and are in need of education. Patients wish to receive information about sexual concerns and they want to discuss this issue without making the first step. Accordingly, the main phenomenon in discussing sexual concerns seems to be "silence": Neither patients nor nurses talk about sexual concerns.

Based on these results we developed an education tool for nurses to prepare them for discussing sexual concerns with heart failure patients. The tool consists of the following components: Knowledge, practical skills, using and developing tools.

Discussion

Only a few nursing education programs focussing on sexual counselling for patients with various diseases are evaluated. It is known that nurses more often address sexual issues after attending an education program. If the current intervention might have such a positive effect, must be verified. Practicability and effects with regard to sexual counselling for patients are pending and their investigation will be the next step in the development of this complex intervention.

Duration of the nurse training fellowship

Place of the Training Fellowship

My nurse training fellowship was supervised by Tiny Jaarsma, a leading nurse researcher in the field of health care provision of people afflicted with heart failure disease. Her research areas mainly are related to improving the care and self-care of cardiac patients. She participated in several research projects (for example the COACH-Study) and are experts in instrumental development and implementation research (EHFSCB-Scale, DOBI-Scale). One topic of her interest is `sexual concerns of people with heart failure` and she is a head of a research group focusing on this topic. Her working place is the Linköping University in Sweden at the Department of Social and Welfare Studies. Regarding to this my fellowship take part at that University in Sweden.

Fellowship period

After being awarded I started to organize my fellowship: Because we, Tiny and I, decided that the data collection regarding to the aim of this fellowship should be in Germany, I only went to Sweden for some periods: to plan the study, to work on that study and to discuss problems and at least the results of this study. So, first of all we had to plan my visits at the University and I had to organize an accommodation in Norrköping.

In August 2011, I travelled the first time to Linköping University in Sweden for five weeks to discuss and plan the study: We developed an information sheet and informed consent form, translated the “sexual counselling instrument of the Undertaking Nursing Interventions Throughout Europe (UNITE) research group of the European Society of Cardiology” (Jaarsma et al. 2010), defined open ended questions to identify especially barriers in discussing sexual concerns with patients and developed an eight-item questionnaire to collect information about socio-demographic and professional background. And we prepared an application for an approval from the ethical committee.

In the End of October 2011 we started data collection to identify if nurses in German hospitals discuss the consequences of heart failure for sexuality and if not, why they do not address this issue. One result was, that nurses in Germany do not really discuss sexual concerns with patients with heart failure and an assessment instrument would not be helpful to change this. But they described, that they are in need of education. Parallel, we looked in the literature to identify how patients experience discussing sexual concerns with nurses. Regarding to the question how and when patients would like to receive information and discuss sexual concerns and which role nurses could play, we could not find an answer in the literature. Regarding to those two findings we decided also to explore the perspective of the patients and their spouses regarding to when and how they would like to get these information. We used a qualitative approach and collected our data in a focus group interview in August 2012.

After we had analyzed all data and reviewed the literature I developed the education tool for nurses and an information sheet for patients (which has to be tested).

All in all I was six times in Sweden for all two to four month. In-between we stayed in contact via e-mail and skype.

Transfer

Scientific output

I presented the results of this nurse training fellowship on several international and national congresses:

Invitate Speaker Presentation

Kolbe N. (2013). Sexuality in patients with Cardiovascular disease: opening Pandora`s Box. Euro Heart Care 2013, Glasgow, UK

Oral Abstract Presentations

Kolbe N., Kugler C., Schnepf W., Jaarsma T. (2012). Sexual counseling of patients with heart failure: perception of german nurses. Heart Failure Congress 2012, Belgrade, Serbia (*Nurse Investigator Award 2012: Runners-up Prize*)

Kolbe N., Kugler C., Schnepf W., Jaarsma T. (2013). How to get information about sexual concerns: Views from heart failure patients. Euro Heart Care 2013, Glasgow, United Kingdom

Kolbe N., Kugler C., Schnepf W., Jaarsma T. (2013). Beratung von Menschen mit chronischer Herzinsuffizienz in Bezug auf Sexualität – Sicht und Rolle der Pflege. Österreichischer Pflegekongress, Bregenz, Austria

Kolbe N., Kugler C., Schnepf W., Jaarsma T. (2013). Sexuelle Aspekte mit Pflegenden diskutieren? – Eine Perspektive von Menschen mit Herzinsuffizienz. ANP-Congress 2013, Berlin, Germany

Kolbe N., Kugler C., Schnepf W., Jaarsma T. (2014). Sexuelle Beratung von Menschen mit Herzinsuffizienz durch Pflegende – Entwicklung einer komplexen Intervention. SCHP 2014, Bern, Switzerland

Posterpresentation

Kolbe N., Kugler C., Schnepf W., Jaarsma T. (2014). Sexual counselling for patients with heart failure – Development of a complex intervention. Euro Heart Care 2014, Stavanga, Norway

Articles

Kolbe N., Kugler C., Schnepf W., Jaarsma T. Sexual counselling in patients with heart failure: a silent phenomenon - results from a convergent parallel mixed method study. Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing (submitted)

Several other articles are in process.

Practical output

The aim of the fellowship was to foster the professional development of nurses in order to improve the outcomes for patients with heart failure (HFA 2011). One result of our research was an education program for supporting nurses in discussions about sexual concerns with heart failure patients. The program has to be evaluated. A second practical result was the integration of our findings in a Nurse Training Program for Heart Failure Nurses in Germany, in lectures held in Master-Programs at the University of Applied Science in St. Gallen, Switzerland and at the University of Applied Science in Vienna, Austria. I also developed an information sheet about sexual concerns for heart failure patients.

Reflection of the nurse training fellowship

It was a great pleasure for me to get the opportunity to work together with Tiny Jaarsma and her colleagues. On the one hand I learnt a lot about collaboration, research and the work of the ESC, especially the CCNAP and the HFA. I could benefit greatly from Tiny`s expertise.

On the other hand I worked in another country and learnt a lot about Sweden and the health care system. The last two years (2011/2012) I went there six times for about two to four weeks on block. Because I always went home in between cultural differences haven`t been a problem. But I think it would have been more effective for me, if I had stayed in Sweden the whole time, because it would have been easier to focus exclusively on this project. Because of this it took more than one year to realize the aim of this fellowship-project.

Regarding the aim of the nurse training fellowship, I think, I achieved the goal: We presented our research on different conferences and implemented the results in a training program for heart failure nurses as well as in two Master programs in Switzerland and Austria.

Acknowledgement

I am very happy that I got the opportunity to experience all these things. I have to thank the HFA for awarding me with this fellowship and I have to thank especially Tiny Jaarsma and her team for the intensive support and very instructive time and wonderful experience in Norrköping!

