E-Poster

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Global Health Engagements- Rehabilitation Knowledge Exchange Program in Ghana and Uganda

Topic: TEAM work: Rehab Professionals

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BACKGROUND

Global health engagements are instrumental in addressing disparities in healthcare, enabling mutual learning and capacity strengthening in resource-limited settings. However, they also present challenges concerning cultural differences and sustainability. The following case description demonstrates an initiative aimed to maximize the value and minimize the challenges of a global health engagement in the field of rehabilitation.

CASE DESCRIPTION

Between June 2022 and November 2024, TEN, an international community development organization, initiated a rehabilitation knowledge exchange program in the central regions of Ghana and Uganda. Whereby, foreign multidisciplinary teams—comprising physiotherapists (PT), occupational therapists (OT), and speech and language therapists (SLT) were integrated into health institutions and community settings and engaged with local professionals consistently- three times annually, five weeks each. Led by local health coordinators, ensuring smooth collaborations and cultural adaptation. The primary objective was to strengthen and develop rehabilitation services with the vision to promote health, participation, daily function and quality of life.

The initiative emphasized mutual knowledge exchange over traditional training, through peer learning, case study discussions and joint initiatives. Much attention was addressed to creating a collaborative learning environment that valued all participants' professional experience. This approach was rooted in the recognition that rehabilitation interventions cannot simply be copied from one context to another but must be adapted to the unique characteristics of each context. Moreover, local professionals are the foremost experts of their own context and should be the owners of the methods they use.

DISCUSSION

The initiative demonstrated meaningful outcomes, positively impacting professionals, patients, and caregivers. Through collaborative efforts, rehabilitation interventions were developed, integrating both local expertise and external knowledge. Exposure followed by peer learning proved to be a highly effective approach, enabling local professionals to assess their current practices and incorporate adapted strategies. Hands-on knowledge-exchange sessions and joint initiatives further facilitated the co-creation of assistive devices using locally available resources and environmental modifications to enhance independence in daily activities. The initiative emphasized ownership of local professionals of adapted rehabilitation interventions. However, sustaining implementation and maintaining local ownership remained a challenge after foreign multidisciplinary teams departed, highlighting the need for improving strategies to ensure long-term impact.

CONCLUSION

Global health engagements in rehabilitation require cultural adaptation to foster meaningful professional collaborations and ensure interventions and rehabilitation solutions align with local context. Strong ownership of local professionals together with a well-structured implementation strategy rooted in institutions and community organizations infrastructures and workflows is critical for sustaining outcomes and impact.

Statement of Disclosures

None

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