

## Notes from the field

# Observations of a Public Health Nurse in the Erasmus Program at the Health Centre of Monte, Madeira/Portugal

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### Abstract

In this paper, impressions and experiences gained during the Erasmus+plus (YITAK Yeni İş Tecrübeleri için Ankara Konsorsiyumu) program is shared by a Phd candidate in Public Health Nursing at the Health Centre of Monte, working from the 5th July to the 7th August, 2015. In this program the host institution was Escola de Enfermagem S. Jose Cluny from Madeira, Portugal and the home institution was the Hacettepe University, Turkey.

**Keywords:** Public health, public health nursing, Erasmus programme, Portugal.

## Bir Halk Sağlığı Hemşiresinin Portekiz/Madeira Monte Sağlık Merkezi'nde Erasmus öğrencisi olarak gözlemleri

### Özet

Bu yazıda, 5 Eylül- 7 Ağustos 2015 tarihleri arasında halk sağlığı hemşiresi doktora öğrencisi olarak, Erasmus+ plus (YITAK, Yeni İş Tecrübeleri için Ankara Konsorsiyumu) programı ile, Portekize bağlı özerk bir ada olan Madeira'da bulunan halk sağlığı merkezlerinden "Monte" de kazanılan izlenimler ve deneyimler paylaşılmıştır. Anlaşma yapılan üniversitelerden ev sahibi üniversite, Portekiz/ Madeira 'dan Escola de Enfermagem S. Jose Cluny, misafir üniversite ise Türkiye/Ankara Hacettepe Üniversitesidir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Halk sağlığı, halk sağlığı hemşireliği, Erasmus Programı, Portekiz

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## **Introduction**

In Madeira, the health sector is managed by the Regional Secretariat of Health and Social Affairs and its activities are divided between two departments: IASAÚDE (Instituto de Administração da Saúde e Assuntos Sociais, IP-Região Autónoma da Madeira); SESARAM, (Serviço de Saúde da Região Autónoma da Madeira).

The Regional Secretariat of Health and Social Affairs also operates the civil security service which deals with health emergencies and natural disasters. The health information system acquires information in two main ways: for the public sector, which includes the main hospital in Funchal, the Dr Nelio Mendonça and the Hospital dos Marmeleiros, as well as 48 primary healthcare centres, which report outpatient and discharge diagnoses to a central database operated by SESARAM and also 2 institutions more

The Community Health Center (CHC) of Monte is one of the public health centers in Madeira, There are 7084 patients' records in Monte. In the CHC, there are doctors, general nurses, specialized nurses, social service workers, nutritionists, social assistants and psychologists. Nurses use computers which include patient lists, their medical and vaccination records. The nurses work for two shifts from 8:00-15:00, 13:00-20:00. On Saturdays they work from 08.30 to 12.30 only, and provide treatments and home visits. In the CHC, appointments are only obtainable from the nurses or doctors. Nurses have independent tasks and also interact with several health professionals as a team. The Community Health Nurse, who is titled as "the Chief nurse", has many responsibilities, including the promotion of healthy living, the prevention of disease and of health problems generally, medical treatments, rehabilitation, evaluation of community health care (CHC) delivery. In the CHC the community health nurse is a good manager, establishes and maintains

interpersonal relationships, communicating with persons and patients.

The midwife nurse has special skills and knowledge and provides primary healthcare to women of childbearing age including: prenatal care, labour and delivery care, care after birth in the institution and at home. She also deals with gynecological exams, fetal doppler newborn care, assistance with family planning decisions, preconception care, menopausal management and counselling for health maintenance and disease prevention. I observed some pilates exercise sessions lasted about 30 minutes and were accompanied by music.

The Specialized Rehabilitation Nurse, has special skills and knowledge. During my observation, she had provided postural drainage for a 4 years old child. She also did physical examinations. She gave sodium chloride in halation using a nebulizer to a child. After that, they start to stimulate cough and then the phlegm was brought up. When this exercise finished, the nurse started some exercises with special balls, when the child is doing these exercise nurse sang children, and they sang together. At the end of these exercises she washed the child's nose with sodium chloride. She checked the color, and was white. The child's mother commented to me about the nurse "she is always creating miracles". Those were appropriate words.

I observed another paediatric nurse, who had a variety of duties, depending on the clinical setting. She performed physical examinations on children, took vital signs and ordered diagnostic tests. She also designed home care plans. I observed while she was giving a shot to a 4 months old baby. She started to talk to the parents about baby's vaccines, sleep times, and milk intake. She also opened some music and played to the baby and preparing for a vaccination. After giving the shot she provided more information to the parents.

Nurses perform home visits every week; physicians perform home visits too.

They provide home visits to individuals and families to assist them with health needs and concerns. Nurses conduct an in-depth health interview; then the client and the nurse together develop a customized health plan. The nurses help people in getting appointment from a health facility, help them to have a healthy pregnancy, with effective breastfeeding, giving advice on how to prevent children from having accidents, and also education for family planning. In addition they help people to make healthy choices in food and health behaviours, follow up and monitor child development, in getting accurate information on children's vaccinations, and how to deal with loss and develop a crisis plan of action.

Another nurse, who is specialized in mental health, works within a multidisciplinary team, liaising with psychiatrists, psychologists, occupational therapists, social workers and other health professionals. She evaluates patients' behavioral and psychological needs; identifying whether and when patients are at risk of harming themselves or others and ensure that treatment for preventing suicides is available.

I observed that every nurse talks with the patients in a very friendly and still professional manner. They create a positive atmosphere with their patients by simply looking at them and listening to empathetically.

Finally, I always learned a professional nursing behaviour from books, articles and nursing school. In the CHC, one can learn how these are put into practice.