In-depth perspectives of faith community nurses serving in Alaska: Findings from a healthcare-academic collaboration

Nathan T. West, PhD*, Lauren Kiker, Doctoral Student, Beverly R. Bateman, MSN, RN, FCN

**Background**
- Faith community nurses (FCNs) serve as public health leaders and health educators in communities of faith.
- FCNs are trained to develop, implement, and enhance congregational health programs.
- FCNs have reported unique challenges in their care delivery to faith communities including training, funding, and available resources.

**Methods**
- Eight FCNs completed a demographic survey and an in-depth interview via Zoom.
- Interview data were analyzed in NVivo.
- Data analysis was informed by a six-step thematic analysis framework.

**Results**
- FCNs were 73.3 years old and served for 11.6 years in urban churches.
- Participants were female, white (88%) and well-educated.
- Qualitative themes were FCN descriptions, challenges, and existing support systems.

**Excerpts from Qualitative Findings**

**Barriers and Challenges Faith Community Nurse’s Experience**
Most participants (n = 8) spoke about how the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted their ministry and congregations (e.g., isolation, fewer continuing education classes, inability to hold blood pressure screenings).

Participants described how they served as the COVID-19 response person (n = 4) for their community during the pandemic (e.g., drafted mitigation protocols).

**Existing Support Systems and Needed Resources**
Most participants discussed the importance of receiving support from church leadership and staff as well as the congregation.
FCNs (n = 6) described the AFCNRC as a major support for their ministry (e.g., ongoing training and coursework, informational newsletters, and support groups).

**Discussion**
- This was the first research study to provide insight into what FCNs experience serving faith communities in Alaska.
- Findings suggest support from the faith community and the AFCNRC may be key for the sustainability of the ministry.

**Implications for Practice**
1) Findings may inform enhanced learning outcomes and modules when training FCNs.
2) Enhanced recruitment efforts are needed to better understand FCN perspectives in Alaska.

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For references and additional information, please contact Dr. Nathan West (ntwest@alaska.edu) and use the QR code to view the electronic poster online.