

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

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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.

Purpose

- 1) Qualitatively document barriers and facilitators FCNs experience while delivering holistic care within Alaskan faith communities.
- 2) Enhance programmatic efforts of the Alaska FCN Resource Center (AFCNRC)

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.

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.

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).

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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