

New Perspectives in Nursing Education: The Role of Nurses in Health Promotion for Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic Region—The Case of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)

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Abstract

The role of international co-operation amongst higher education institutions in projects directed to promoting the health of Arctic populations, based on the example of nursing faculty at the Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University, is discussed. It is suggested that problems of education and health of Arctic peoples should have modern scientific and methodological support. It is necessary to develop co-operative new approaches to improve the quality of health care for inhabitants of the Arctic. This report is part of a special collection from members of the University of the Arctic Thematic Network on Northern Nursing Education. The collection explores models of decentralized and distributed university-level nursing education across the Circumpolar North.

Recently, the world community has paid the Arctic region special attention due to the Arctic's unique geographical and political position, huge natural resources, and economic potential. In the Russian Federation, despite an intensive urbanization of society, Indigenous people of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) have managed to maintain their special form of civilization, adapted for the extreme climatic conditions of the Arctic, and to continue their agricultural and traditional cultures— hunting, fishing, cattle breeding, horse herding, and reindeer breeding. Great value is given to the education and health of the Indigenous population so they may continue to preserve their culture, natural living environment, and traditional lifestyle in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

The medical institute of the Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University (NEFU), together with the College of Nursing at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, has taken an active role in international projects directed at the education and health promotion of the Arctic population.

One of the main areas of international co-operation has been implementation of the project “Introduction of Distance Technology in the Remote and Small Settlements of Rural Areas” and organization of the University of the Arctic's Thematic Network on Northern Nursing Education.

The main objective of these projects is to provide accessible nursing and health care education to the populations living in the rural and remote areas of the Circumpolar North—this includes promoting distance and distributed undergraduate nursing education and scientific continuing education to the health workers practising in Arctic regions. We hope to improve the quality of nursing education and health care for the northern populations, to exchange best practices, and to create a community of students and teachers by establishing an international network involving partners in Norway, Canada, the Republic of Sakha (Russia), Alaska (United States), Iceland, and Greenland.

It is necessary to highlight the significant organizational work that, through international co-operation between NEFU and the University of Saskatchewan, preceded these international projects.

In 2012, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between NEFU and the University of Saskatchewan in the fields of education and sciences; the signing was precipitated by the successful co-operation between the nursing department of the NEFU medical institute and the College of Nursing at the University of Saskatchewan. The main directions of the memorandum included faculty, undergraduate, and post-graduate student exchanges; joint international conferences, seminars, and forums;

and visiting lecturer invitations for delivering seminars and scientific reports.

Within the memorandum framework, in May 2013 the NEFU medical institute held a regional scientific and practical conference on “The role of higher nursing education in nurse development,” which included participation by the University of Saskatchewan’s College of Nursing.

In October 2013, the department of nursing at the NEFU medical institute organized a video conference event with the University of Saskatchewan College of Nursing, which was devoted to the tenth anniversary of higher nursing education (i.e., degree level) in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

An international symposium on “Topical issues concerning patient care in the North” was held during the IV Congress on “Ecology and health of the person in the North” on December 4-5, 2013 (Yakutsk, NEFU), with participation by the University of Saskatchewan.

Since September 2013, NEFU students have been participating, with the University of Saskatchewan College of Nursing and the University of the East Ramon Magsaysay College of Nursing (Philippines), in a long-term international students’ project on “Pathways to Rural/Remote Health Capacity.”

In March 2014, NEFU participated in the international forum on “Building the Scholarship of Remote Presence Telementoring” at the University of Saskatchewan.

In May 2014, NEFU participated on a joint panel at the VIII International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences, in Prince George, British Columbia, along with the University of Saskatchewan College of Nursing. The panel discussed international partnerships, and the use of distance learning technologies for nurse education and the delivery of health care for inhabitants of remote and small settlements of the Arctic.

In January 2015, challenges and lessons learned in introducing remote presence technology were discussed at an international forum held in Manila, Philippines.

In April 2015, NEFU participated in an international symposium held in Reykjavik, Iceland regarding the realization of joint grants, scientific research, publications, and administrative steps towards the approval of a Thematic Network on Northern Nursing Education by the University of the Arctic Council. The thematic network was later approved in June 2015.

Since 2015, graduates of the NEFU Medical Institute’s Department of Nursing have regularly held international master classes, with the

use of remote presence technology, for practising nurses with medical institutions in the northern regions of Russia and Canada.

In August 2015, the Innovative Learning Institute on Circumpolar Health was successfully carried out at the NEFU medical institute, proceeding from the project on introducing remote presence technology protecting the health of people living in the remote and small settlements of the North of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

These collective iterations of international co-operation amongst institutions of higher learning for nursing education show that further international alignment of many socio-political directions will be required in order to devise solutions to the challenges of health promotion and education of the Indigenous people of the Arctic, in addition to, and aside from, the geopolitical condition of co-existence.

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