

Submitted

7/7/2023

Revised

31/12/2023

Accepted

31/12/2023

Published

31/12/2023



CLINICAL EXPERIENCES

Clinical nursing experiences in Singapore: A far away from home

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<https://doi.org/10.31603/ihs.9571>

Abstract

As the global population lives longer, healthcare systems must adapt to meet new problems. The seamless transition of patients from acute care settings to home environments is now possible thanks to the implementation of transitional care teams. It may be said that nurses' duties have 'emerged differently' than their conventional counterparts. To better support care integration, various nurse duties have been taken on. This article presents a clinical experience that was gained while working in a nursing home in Singapore. When working in a foreign country, nurses should be well prepared, both in terms of their knowledge and their professional skills.

Keywords: healthcare system; working abroad; community health; innovation in society; clinical experiences

Introduction

Working as a nurse in a different country can be a highly fulfilling career path, particularly for individuals with a strong desire to provide care for others (McKenna et al., 2023). This experience can offer the opportunity to gain new skills and even lead to new career options (Wu et al., 2022). Practicing nursing in other countries presents itself to both experienced nurses and nursing students, and the experiences gained can be useful in broadening one's career prospects and acquiring essential nursing competencies (Yan et al., 2021). The opportunity to practice nursing in a foreign country can be a truly transformative experience for both seasoned professionals and aspiring nursing students. For experienced nurses, this venture can open up a world of new possibilities, allowing them to expand their skill sets and broaden their career horizons (Viken, Solum, & Lyberg, 2018). Nurses can gain invaluable insights and perspectives that may not be readily available in their home countries by immersing themselves in a different healthcare system. This exposure can lead to the development of essential competencies, such as adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and problem-solving skills, all of which are highly sought after in the dynamic and ever-evolving nursing field (Zulfiqar et al., 2023). Furthermore, working as a nurse in another country can be a deeply enriching personal journey. The chance to live and work in a new environment, surrounded by diverse cultures and customs, can foster a profound sense of personal growth and enlightenment. Nurses may find themselves challenged to step outside their comfort zones, navigate unfamiliar bureaucratic systems, and communicate effectively with patients and colleagues from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These experiences can cultivate a deeper understanding and appreciation for the human condition, ultimately enhancing the nurse's ability to provide compassionate and holistic care to their patients (Roth, Berger, Krug, Mahler, & Wensing, 2021).

For nursing students, the opportunity to work or volunteer overseas can be a transformative addition to their academic and professional development. Such experiences can not only fulfill internship or clinical requirements but also offer a unique platform for students to apply their theoretical knowledge in a real-world setting. Students can develop a more comprehensive understanding of the nursing profession, gain exposure to diverse nursing practices and technologies, and forge valuable connections with healthcare providers from around the globe (Pressley, Newton, Garside, Stephenson, & Mejia-Olivares, 2023). This international experience can be a powerful catalyst for personal growth, broadening students' perspectives and equipping them with the adaptability and cultural competence that are increasingly crucial in today's interconnected world of healthcare (Miyata, 2023). There are numerous fantastic opportunities waiting for registered nurses overseas, which can be beneficial for achieving goals such as expanding one's general and professional skill sets and personal development. The following is a clinical experience of working in home health care in Singapore.

I am Wiji Astuti, a Bachelor of Nursing graduate from the Faculty of Health Science, Universitas Muhammadiyah Magelang, Indonesia. I will tell you about my experience working at one of the Nursing homes in Singapore. I worked at one of the Nursing homes in Singapore from March 14, 2017, to February 15, 2021. The nursing home has more than 336 patients, divided into five counties and separated by gender. About 55% of patients in my working room wear out treatment partially, and 45% depend on nurses. I was using the orphanage functional nursing method when I started working there. Every nurse has their respective daily tasks, such as feeding, dressing, assisting clothing, accompanying exercise activities, grooming, and general cleaning, and will be on rotation for assignments every day. Each new staff member has a trial period of 3 months to meet the checklist of nursing skills already applied. The Senior will be shown to accompany the new staff for one month on the routine and work to be done. Speech therapy will evaluate each patient to determine the causes of swallowing disorders and the consistency of any safe fluids given to the patient. Each patient has a different character of fluids and food, depending on their swallowing ability. The dietitian will provide the diet needed by each patient. So, the task of feeding is to prepare supplements and levels of food consistency for patients and help those who need help eating. Adapula patients who suffer from NGT (nasogastric tube) because they do not have sensors for swallowing or are very weak when eating are concerned about causing aspiration.

The dressing is the treatment of wounds according to the medication or dressing prescribed by the doctor and under the supervision of the nurse in charge. In addition, we also check patients' vital signs and perform basic nursing care such as bathing, maintaining personal hygiene, helping over the bed, cleansing patients, and helping move patients from bed to wheelchair or vice versa. This nursing home has a hoist, a special tool for raising patients when they want to take a bath or transfer. In addition to basic nursing care, we also have to report when there is a condition from an unusual patient to a responsible nurse, write a daily report according to our authority, help when there are new patients, and maintain patient safety. Every nurse is equipped with CPR training and has a license to perform CPR for those who qualify.

In 2019, I had the opportunity to study ITE skills in health for six months. I have an ITE certificate in health care. So you can do the activities already given in the training, such as feeding through a probe shell or installing a catheter on a woman, under the supervision of a responsible nurse. And after a couple of months, I learned that team methods replaced nursing. So, there was some debate about adapting to the new work system. This method focuses more on collaboration and mutual assistance among staff. And at the beginning of COVID-19, our plans changed again to meet the infection control standards applied in Singapore. My difficulty was that I was the first person from Indonesia to work there and the only Indonesian to work in my country. Of course, communication became unusual for me because I had to use English, and my colleagues from the Philippines, Myanmar, India, and Sri Lanka, who have different languages, had to get used to it. But I'm happy to work with staff from other countries that can add to my life experience. And many staff activities, such as Cultural Day, Nurses Day, and Re-treat. Everything went well when I worked at the Nursing Home, and I am so grateful that the staff and patients there loved me. Honesty, gentleness, professionalism in work, and a good attitude will make a good impression. Thanks also to Fikes UNIMMA, who taught me and made me a good person and professional at work.

Discussion

Working as a nurse in a different country can offer a multitude of potential benefits, both professionally and personally. One of the primary benefits of working as a nurse in a foreign country is the opportunity for professional development and growth (Dahl, Nortvedt, Schröder, & Bjørnnes, 2022). Nurses who immerse themselves in a new healthcare system are exposed to diverse nursing practices, technologies, and approaches to patient care. This exposure can lead to the acquisition of new skills, knowledge, and perspectives that can be invaluable in enhancing their nursing competencies. Additionally, directing unfamiliar bureaucratic and regulatory environments can foster problem-solving abilities, adaptability, and a deeper understanding of the complexities of the nursing profession on a global scale (Kurup, Betihavas, Burston, & Jacob, 2023). Gaining experience in a different country can also open up new career opportunities for nurses. The skills and insights acquired during an international nursing stint can make them more attractive to potential employers, both in their home countries and abroad. Employers often value the cultural awareness, language proficiency, and adaptability that nurses develop through cross-cultural experiences, as these attributes can be highly beneficial in delivering patient-centered care to diverse patient populations (**Figure 1**).



Figure 1. Illustration of delivering patient-centered care (Courtesy of unsplash.com)

Working as a nurse in a different country can also contribute to significant personal growth and development. Immersing oneself in a new cultural environment, navigating language barriers, and adapting to unfamiliar societal norms can foster a deeper understanding and appreciation for cultural diversity (Kingma, 2007). This experience can cultivate empathy, flexibility, and a broader worldview, all of which can enhance a nurse's ability to provide compassionate and holistic care to patients from various backgrounds. Nurses who work in different countries have the opportunity to establish valuable professional networks and collaborate with healthcare providers from around the world (Kauff et al., 2023). These connections can lead to the exchange of best practices, the sharing of innovative ideas, and the potential for future collaborative projects or research endeavors (Ansa et al., 2020). Such international partnerships can be instrumental in driving the nursing profession forward and improving patient outcomes on a global scale. Working as a nurse in a different country can be a deeply fulfilling and rewarding experience. The opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of patients in a new cultural context, while also experiencing personal growth and adventure, can be a source of immense personal satisfaction and professional pride for nurses. Overall, the potential benefits of working as a nurse in a different country are multifaceted, encompassing professional development, career advancement, personal growth, networking opportunities, and a profound sense of personal fulfillment.

When a nurse takes on the opportunity to work in a different country, they may encounter significant cultural differences in nursing practices between their home country and the host country (Červený, Kratochvílová, Hellerová, & Tóthová, 2022). Understanding and navigating these cultural nuances can be both challenging and rewarding. Some potential areas where cultural differences in nursing practices may arise. The dynamics between nurses and patients can vary greatly across cultures (Osmancevic, Großschädl, & Lohrmann, 2023). For example, in some countries, a more paternalistic approach to healthcare may be the norm, where the nurse is expected to take

a more authoritative role in decision-making (**Figure 2**). In contrast, other cultures may emphasize a more collaborative, patient-centered approach, where the nurse works in partnership with the patient and their family. The way nurses communicate with patients, colleagues, and the healthcare team can be heavily influenced by cultural norms.



Figure 2. Illustration of authoritative role (*Courtesy of unsplash.com*).

Differences may arise in the level of directness, the use of nonverbal cues, the importance placed on hierarchy and seniority, and the preferred communication channels (e.g., verbal, written, or electronic). Cultural beliefs and attitudes towards health, illness, and the role of healthcare providers can vary significantly. Nurses may encounter different perspectives on the causes of illness, the use of traditional or complementary therapies, and the involvement of family members in the patient's care (Liu et al., 2022). The scope of practice and the specific responsibilities of nurses can differ across countries, reflecting variations in healthcare systems, educational requirements, and professional regulations. Nurses may need to adapt to new roles, task delegations, and decision-making processes (Birhanu, Getnet, & Alem, 2023). Ethical dilemmas in nursing practice may be influenced by cultural norms and values. Nurses may encounter different perspectives on issues such as end-of-life care, informed consent, patient autonomy, and the role of family members in decision-making. The work environment and organizational culture of healthcare institutions can vary significantly across countries. Nurses may need to adapt to different leadership styles, team dynamics, resource availability, and institutional policies and procedures. Navigating these cultural differences can be both challenging and rewarding for nurses. Developing cultural competence, maintaining an open and adaptable mindset, and proactively seeking to understand the local context can be crucial for nurses to provide high-quality, culturally sensitive care and to thrive in their new work environment (Nair & Adetayo, 2019).

The scope of practice and decision-making processes for nurses can vary significantly between a nurse's home country and the host country where they are working, presenting both challenges and opportunities for professional growth. Nurses may encounter differences in the specific tasks and duties they are authorized to

perform, as well as the levels of autonomy and independent decision-making granted to them (Nibbelink & Brewer, 2018). The availability and scope of specialized nursing roles, such as nurse practitioners or nurse anesthetists, can also differ across countries, as can the nurse's role in medication administration and the extent of their involvement in advanced practice activities (**Figure 3**). Similarly, the decision-making hierarchy within the healthcare team may be more or less rigid, with varying degrees of physician oversight and nurse autonomy (Arends et al., 2022). The level of collaboration between nurses, physicians, and other healthcare providers in the decision-making process can also differ, as can the involvement of patients and their families. Ethical considerations around issues like end-of-life care, informed consent, or resource allocation may be influenced by cultural norms and healthcare system structures. Additionally, the specific requirements and processes for documenting and reporting nursing decisions and interventions may vary between countries. These differences in scope of practice and decision-making processes can be a significant challenge for nurses, requiring them to adapt to new systems, understand local regulations and guidelines, and effectively communicate with the healthcare team to provide safe, high-quality care and fully integrate into their new work environment (Majid et al., 2011).



Figure 3. Illustration of communication process (Courtesy of unsplash.com).

The intricate tapestry of regulatory environments that govern the nursing profession can vary profoundly between one's native land and the host country in which they choose to practice their noble craft. These divergent frameworks, akin to the ebb and flow of tides, can have a profound impact on the very essence of how nurses navigate their professional journeys, compelling them to adapt and evolve their practices with the dexterity of a virtuoso. From the foundational requirements of nursing education and licensure to the nuanced delineations of scope of practice and autonomous decision-making, the chasm between home and host can be vast and unyielding. Nurses may find themselves confronted with disparate expectations regarding the authorized activities

they may undertake, the extent of their prescriptive authority, and the degree of physician oversight mandated. Moreover, the ethical principles and quality assurance mechanisms that undergird the nursing ethos can differ markedly, challenging practitioners to align their moral compasses with the cultural norms and societal values of their newfound environment (Turkson-Ocran et al., 2022). Even the pragmatic considerations of workplace regulations, such as staffing ratios, work hours, and occupational safety, can vary significantly, necessitating a keen understanding of the local legislative landscape (**Figure 4**). This labyrinth of regulatory divergence requires nurses to cultivate a profound adaptability, engaging in continuous professional development and maintaining open channels of communication with governing bodies, all in service of upholding the highest standards of care and preserving their professional integrity within the unfamiliar terrain.



Figure 4. Illustration of work hours (Courtesy of *unsplash.com*).

The divergent regulatory environments between a nurse's home country and the host country can have a profound impact on their day-to-day nursing practice. These differences can manifest in various ways, presenting both challenges and opportunities for nurses to adapt and thrive in their new work setting. The variations in the authorized scope of nursing practice can significantly influence the day-to-day tasks and decision-making processes for nurses. Nurses may find themselves either empowered with greater autonomy and expanded responsibilities, or conversely, restricted in their ability to perform certain interventions or make independent clinical decisions (Lukewich, Tranmer, Kirkland, & Walsh, 2019). This can require nurses to carefully navigate the boundaries of their practice, ensuring compliance with local regulations while advocating for their patients' needs. Differences in regulations surrounding medication administration, prescription rights, and controlled substance handling can dramatically impact the nurse's role in the medication management process (Sahputra, Lumbantobing, & Tuppal, 2021). Nurses may need to familiarize themselves with new protocols, documentation requirements, and collaborative workflows with physicians or pharmacists, which can add complexity to their daily routines. The varying levels of interprofessional collaboration and decision-making hierarchies can shape the nurse's interactions with other healthcare providers. Nurses may need to adapt their communication styles,

assertiveness, and negotiation skills to effectively navigate the local healthcare team dynamics, ensuring seamless coordination of patient care. The specific requirements and processes for documenting nursing interventions, patient outcomes, and incident reporting can differ significantly between countries. Nurses may need to invest time and effort in understanding and adhering to the host country's documentation standards, which can impact their efficiency and the continuity of care. Disparities in the continuing education and professional development requirements for nurses can influence their ability to maintain and enhance their competencies (Mlambo, Silén, & McGrath, 2021). Nurses may need to proactively seek out opportunities to fulfill the host country's specific learning and certification needs, ensuring they remain current with evolving nursing practices and regulations. Variations in workplace regulations, such as staffing ratios, work hours, and occupational safety standards, can directly impact the nurse's day-to-day work environment and overall well-being. Nurses may need to navigate new policies and advocate for their own health and work-life balance to avoid burnout and provide high-quality care. A deeper understanding of these divergent regulatory environments requires nurses to demonstrate a high degree of adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and a willingness to continuously learn and evolve their practice. By proactively addressing these challenges, nurses can leverage the opportunities presented by the host country's unique regulatory landscape to enhance their professional growth and deliver exceptional patient care (Zhang et al., 2022).

Nurses working in the vibrant city-state of Singapore often find themselves navigating a tapestry of unique challenges that are woven into the fabric of the country's healthcare landscape. One of the most pressing issues is the persistent nursing shortage, which has led to high patient-to-nurse ratios and increased workloads, often leaving nurses feeling overwhelmed and stretched thin. The high-paced, demanding environment can make it arduous for these dedicated professionals to provide the personalized, holistic care they strive for, as they find themselves juggling the needs of a large number of patients. Compounding this challenge are the language and cultural barriers that nurses must overcome when caring for Singapore's diverse population. Navigating differences in communication styles, healthcare beliefs, and decision-making processes requires a deep understanding and sensitivity, as nurses work to deliver culturally appropriate care. This adaptive skill set becomes even more crucial as the nation's population ages and the prevalence of chronic diseases rises, necessitating specialized knowledge and coordination of care across various healthcare settings. Amidst these professional challenges, nurses in Singapore must also contend with the delicate balance of work-life harmony. The high-pressure work environment and long working hours can take a toll on their physical and mental well-being, making it crucial for nurses to cultivate effective stress management strategies and access supportive work-life balance initiatives. Overcoming these multifaceted obstacles requires a resilient spirit and a steadfast commitment to providing exceptional patient care in this dynamic, multicultural setting.

Conclusion

Nurses can navigate the challenges of working in a host country and emerge as culturally competent, adaptable, and effective healthcare providers by proactively engaging in cultural learning, language development, and leveraging available support systems. This not only enhances their professional growth but also contributes to the delivery of high-quality, patient-centered care in the host country. Nurses in Singapore must also grapple with the complexities of the country's well-developed regulatory framework, which may differ significantly from the systems they are accustomed to in their home countries. Mastering the nuances of scope of practice, medication administration protocols, and documentation requirements can present an additional hurdle, alongside the need for continuous professional development to keep pace with evolving nursing practices. Further studies are required to explore more this kind of experiences with qualitative method.

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Author's perspective

Key points

- Working as a nurse in a different country can be a highly fulfilling career path
- The adaptive skill set becomes even more crucial as the nation's population ages and the prevalence of chronic diseases rises
- Nurses can navigate the challenges of working in a host country and emerge as culturally competent

Potential areas of interest

- What are the challenges faced by nurses when working abroad?
- What supportive system to improve nursing skills?
- When must clinical nurses work in another country?

How to cite this article (APA style)

Astuti, W. (2023). Clinical nursing experiences in Singapore: A far away from home. *Innovation in Health for Society*, 3(2), 56-64. <https://doi.org/10.31603/ihs.9571>