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Community-Based Nursing Education at the Campsite

M. Susan Jones, MSN, RN; Donna Bussey, MSN, RN; and Carrie Morgan, MSN, ARNP

Farming is one of the most dangerous occupations (Aherin, Murphy, Westby, 1992; National Safety Council, 1998). Each year thousands of adult agricultural workers experience occupational injuries and illnesses, many of which result in permanent disability or death. A recent study of children and adolescents 19 years and younger revealed an average of 104 deaths a year because of farm injuries (Rivara, 1997). Also, individuals engaged in farming are at an increased risk for the development of specific disorders such as hearing loss (Broste, Hansen, Strand, Stueland, 1981; Crutchfield & Sparks, 1991); zoonotic diseases (Kligman, Peate, & Cordes, 1991); respiratory disorders (Schenker, Ferguson & Gamsky, 1991; Merchant, 1987); chemical exposure (Cordes & Foster, 1991); and stress related disorders (Lovelace, 1995; Aherin, Murphy, & Westaby, 1992). Thus, the incidence of injuries and illnesses among the farming population is alarming and reflects a public health concern. Promoting the health of farmers and their families is a challenge for community health nurses.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

During the last five years, numerous approaches have been initiated to address this public health problem. Examples of these approaches include the establish-

ment of local community coalitions to provide educational resources and programs designed to reduce illnesses and injuries associated with the occupation of farming. One such organization, The Kentucky Partnership for Farm Family Health and Safety, Inc., (The KY Partnership) was established five years ago with funds received from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The primary goal of The KY Partnership was to bring together farm women, their families, and their communities to achieve a collective goal of improved health and safety practices on the farm. Noted activities of the organization include sponsoring a three-day farm rescue training course for local emergency rescue personnel, presenting educational programs on farm safety in rural communities, and providing CPR and first aid training to farmers and their families.

In 1994, *Progressive Farmer* magazine announced a bold initiative with a nationwide plan to sponsor Farm Safety Day Camps aimed at protecting the number one farm resource—children visiting and residing on farms. Since 1995, the number of camps sponsored by *Progressive Farmer* has increased from 19 to 250 camps planned for all regions of the U.S. in 1998 (S. Reynolds, personal communication, July 15, 1998). For the past four years, The Kentucky Partnership has collaborated with *Progressive Farmer* to co-sponsor annual Farm Safety Day Camps aimed at reducing childhood injuries on the farm.

Conducting a Farm Safety Day Camp requires a team effort. *Progressive Farmer* along with national sponsors provide camp coordinator training, insurance for the campers, goodie bags filled with safety literature and equipment, specially-designed T-shirts for all campers, and

publicity for the camp. Early each year, leaders from The KY Partnership select camp coordinators who participate in training conducted by *Progressive Farmer*. These coordinators provide the leadership in planning the camp based on common agricultural risks in the local community. The age of the campers is considered when planning educational activities and recruiting local volunteers. The format of the camp, though revised annually, always includes food, fun activities, and interactive educational sessions that address diverse topics including tractor, fire, electrical, pond, and lawn mower safety. Adult leaders, essential for the success of the camp, are recruited from businesses, FFA chapters, 4-H clubs, and service sororities and fraternities. Faculty and students affiliated with the departments of nursing and agriculture at the local, regional university are also recruited to assist with the camp.

BACCALAUREATE NURSING STUDENTS

Each year, approximately 20 baccalaureate nursing students from an urban university participate in a community health nursing course in a rural setting. Other than a few personal experiences with rural life, the students come with a limited understanding of the culture and health problems specific to the farming population. This educational experience is facilitated by the South Central Area Health Education Center (AHEC) whose primary mission is recruitment of health care providers to rural areas.

The students reside in the rural community for eight weeks. They are required to determine major rural health problems

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associated with rurality and to participate in community projects. At the beginning of this rural rotation, the students explore the application of the nursing process to communities at risk. Working with the Farm Safety Day Camp is one example of an experience that provides students the opportunity to operationalize the nursing process.

CAMP EXPERIENCE

Assessment

Several strategies are used to prepare the students for the camp experience. These include an introduction to the mission of The Kentucky Partnership and a discussion on how coalitions are formed. Students participate in a one-day "team-building" exercise designed to enhance their ability to engage in collaborative practice. Concepts associated with rurality along with agricultural health and safety issues are introduced to the students through classroom presentations and assigned readings. These strategies prepare the students to assess the specific health risks of farm children effectively and to partner with a community-based coalition to address these risks.

Planning

Initial planning for the camp starts months before the students begin their rural community health rotation. Initially, the students are introduced to the purpose of the camp and their role in the implementation of the camp. The evening preceding the event, the students meet with coalition members at the camp site. At this informal meeting, students receive an orientation to the camp facility, the camp format, and an overview of their expected role and responsibility on camp day. Included are instructions for handling anticipated problems and trouble shooting. To enhance cohesiveness, coalition members and students assemble goody bags and participate in a cook-out, planned by the coalition members to demonstrate their appreciation for the service of the students. All camp participants, volunteers, and students receive a camp shirt to be worn on camp day.

Implementation

The students arrive early the day of

the camp and welcome over 100 energetic campers ages from 6 to 13 years. Two to three students are assigned to one group and remain with that group for the entire camp experience. The diverse responsibilities of the students are assisting campers with completing a pretest, rotating through each educational session with a group of campers, and facilitating breaks and lunches for their assigned group. Presenters of these educational sessions have expertise in topics such as fire, electrical, tractor, and animal safety. Ensuring the safety of each camper and emphasizing key educational points presented in each session are specific assignments for the students. At the conclusion of the camp, the students assist the campers in completing the post-test and lend their aid to coalition members in the detailed release of each camper.

Evaluation

Camp evaluations indicate that mutual benefits result from the participation of the nursing students. Students increase their knowledge base regarding agricultural health and safety issues. As one student commented, "It was great for the city dwelling nursing students to both learn about rural farm life and to deal with the kids." Knowledge gained will be useful as students provide nursing care for rural clients. The camp also provides the students with opportunities to demonstrate teamwork, collaboration, and role modeling while receiving first-hand experience in working with coalitions. Students apply principles of growth and development as they supervise the campers throughout the day and experience an "inside" view of rural culture as they work with the rural coalition leaders.

The coalition benefits from the volunteer services of the students. Coalition members seek and use advice from the students in the areas of first aid, growth and development, and the management of special problems such as hyperactive children. The collaboration between the students and coalition allow the campers to experience a safe, fun-filled day while receiving information about agricultural health and health issues.

CONCLUSION

Collaborating with a community-based

coalition to implement a Farm Safety Day Camp allowed the students to meet the learning objectives for a community health nursing course while simultaneously helping a local coalition to achieve its goal. Plans are to continue this learning experience with the goal of involving students in the planning phase of the camp. As nurse educators explore learning opportunities at community-based sites, we encourage collaboration with similar coalitions or community organizations.

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