



Brenda Happell (wearing purple) with colleagues in Bahrain

Community mental health nursing in Bahrain – an inside perspective

BY BRENDA HAPPELL

Australian mental health services are recognised as among the most developed in the world and it is widely acknowledged that mental health nurses contribute significantly to the outcomes of these services. The Kingdom of Bahrain has identified the development of community mental health services as a major goal and sought Australian expertise to assist in guiding this process.

I was fortunate to be appointed as a consultant to the World Health Organization (WHO) to review existing services in Bahrain and assist the development of an action plan for the short and longer term future.

Bahrain is a small country in the Middle East with a population of approximately one million. Currently there are six community mental health nurses in the entire nation. These nurses work in teams of two and provide care for a total case load of 300 with each team caring for approximately 100 consumers. In sharp contrast and to offer some perspective, Queensland currently has around 46 case managers per 100,000 (in comparison to 0.6 in Bahrain) and is aiming for 70 by 2017.

A major restructure of services is needed in Bahrain before a greater community focus can be achieved. However, a lot of positive work is being done. A strong commitment to community mental health nursing was evident throughout the hospital and from the Ministry of Health. The contribution nursing makes is widely acknowledged and nursing is seen to have a leadership role in any change to mental health service delivery.

Despite high workloads the community mental health nurses were conscientious and dedicated. I was fortunate enough to join them on home visits and was impressed with the rapport they had built with consumers and their families. Time was a major limitation to their practice. It was a fantastic opportunity and hopefully the beginning of an ongoing relationship.

A taped interview of Brenda's Bahrain experience can be found at:
<http://uninews.cqu.edu.au/UniNews/viewStory.do?story=5938>

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39

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