



WCFR: Improving Health in Haiti through Education

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INTRODUCTION

Worldwide Community First Responder (WCFR) is a non-profit/charitable organization with a mission “to prevent deaths worldwide through education and training”. WCFR provides health education, and worldwide community-based first response and first aid training.

WCFR has ongoing projects in Haiti sponsored by Haitian American Nurses Association (HANA). HANA collaborates with other organizations to promote health and wellness through education.

Within the last two years, WCFR initiated two projects in collaboration with HANA at Faculty of Nursing Science of Episcopal University of Haiti (FSIL): Leogane Community Health Project; and FSIL Disaster Preparedness Project.

Additionally, WCFR worked on nine sub-projects with FSIL students to educate the Leogane community members about fatal health conditions and preventative measures, and to prepare the Leogane community for disasters.

BACKGROUND & SIGNIFICANCE

Faculté des Sciences Infirmières de Léogane (FSIL) is a nursing school located 20 miles west of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in the town of Leogane. It is the first baccalaureate degree nursing program in Haiti. The nursing school was started to help improve the care at Hopital St. Croix (HSC) located in Leogane, Haiti and the care in the rest of Haiti. Since the opening of the school in 2005, FSIL students made a major difference in the level of care being received at HSC (FSIL School of Nursing, 2012).

Haiti is facing a serious healthcare delivery crisis (Jerome & Ivers, 2010). Haitian American Nurses Association (HANA) is addressing the healthcare delivery crisis by collaborating with nursing organizations and corporations and initiating projects to transform Haiti health care. HANA initiated the FSIL “Teaching Initiative” Project in Haiti, sponsored by HCR Manor Care, to engage Haitian American nurse educators from the United States to travel to Haiti to teach at FSIL (HANA of Florida, 2013). Through the FSIL Project, HANA collaborated with Worldwide Community First Responder (WCFR) and sponsored community health projects and a disaster preparedness project.

As in the Haiti earthquake of 2010, the successions of events in an emergency are not predictable. A major disaster may occur on FSIL campus at any time of the day or night, weekend or holiday, with little or no warning. Residents in the geographical location of FSIL may be affected; therefore emergency services may not be available. Depending on the scale and intensity of damage, the community could be left stranded for up to seventy-two hours until external assistance reaches them (World Health Organization, 2007). Following any disaster, the first seventy-two hours are most crucial (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2010). FSIL may be the only institution who could help the community. The damaging effect of a disaster can be considerably reduced by well-trained FSIL students, who can be self-sufficient within 72 hours following a disaster.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Leogane Community Health Project is to identify the most pressing health problems in the Leogane community, which can be addressed through community action.

The purpose of FSIL Disaster Preparedness Project is to establish sustainable non-government policies and procedures for disasters at FSIL.

METHODS

Leogane Community Health Project

FSIL students were trained to assess community health through surveys; analyze data collected; and recommend interventions to improve community health. They were divided into three groups; each assigned a section of Leogane for a group project.



FSIL students learned to analyze both access to and adequacy of community resources available to community members. The importance of health promotion in the community is emphasized.

FSIL Disaster Preparedness Project

FSIL students were trained to assess the FSIL community's risk and vulnerability for disasters; develop a disaster preparedness plan with a focus on earthquakes, flooding and hurricanes; and provide first response and first aid. They were divided into three groups; each assigned a natural disaster for a group project.



RESULTS

The two projects initiated by WCFR were evaluated through a pre and post-test given to the nursing students on community health and disaster preparedness. FSIL students were evaluated through group sub-projects and multiple choice exams.

The goals of the projects are to improve the quality of pre-hospital care and to lessen the adverse medical effects created by natural disasters.



The Leogane Community Health Project engages FSIL students in promoting healthy lifestyles in their community.



The FSIL Disaster Preparedness Project engages FSIL students in making their community safer, better prepared, and more resilient to disasters.



CONCLUSIONS

Through the Leogane Community Health Project and FSIL Disaster Preparedness Project, WCFR seeks to empower individuals in the Leogane community and save lives. Although these projects are conducted at FSIL, they can be utilized for further interventions in improving health through education both in Haiti and in other parts of the world.



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For more information on Worldwide Community First Responder, please visit www.wcfrworldwide.org

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