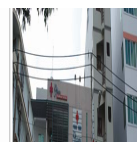


Treading lightly: The political and discriminatory obstacles overcome by the nurse who opened a private HIV clinic for mothers and children in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Brenda Wolfe R.N. C.N.S. A.C.R.N.
 Director of HIV Services
 HIV Maternal Child Advanced Practice Nurse.
 Mount Sinai Hospital
 Chicago, IL
 (312) 593 8969
 November 17, 2012
 wolb@sinai.org

OBJECTIVES

- Follow the course of events of a U.S nurse who successfully developed and implemented an HIV clinic in a communist country
- Recognize how nurses can use critical thinking and strategic planning to overcome the most challenging barriers
- Understand the impact cultural sensitivity and discrimination play in project success
- Identify how networking creates opportunities



Government, Religion, Stigma : All barriers in a communist country.

Is it really possible for a nurse to navigate these obstacles?

YES
Nurses are critical thinkers



Bickford-Land Clinic for mothers and children (BLCMC)
 An HIV clinic located in HCMC , Vietnam. Opened August 2006, following the two years of nursing research in the following areas:

- Prevalence of the problem
- Need for funding and assistance
- Extent of the language barrier
- Differences in business, family, and health culture
- Existing private entities
- Current work in progress in the HIV field
- Potential collaborations
- Relationship between church and state
- Degree of stigma

FINDINGS

Financial Status: Need of Assistance

- The HIV epidemic in Vietnam has not stabilized. HCMC remains far from having a sustainable, comprehensive, National HIV program.
- In 2009, the Vietnamese government funded an approximate 15% of the 103 million spent of the country's cost for HIV care.
- Vietnam receives almost 85% of its funding for HIV care from external support sources such U.S Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) The Global Fund to fight AIDS, and Asian Development Bank.
- PEPFAR's financial plan in providing 89 million dollars for Vietnam's HIV costs are earmarked to end in 2013.

Perinatal HIV in Vietnam

HCMC People AIDS Committee published: As of 2006 there were 1,750 children infected with HIV. It is estimated the number of children living with HIV will increase to 7,040 by 2015 making up a large portion of new infections.



Barriers

- Communist country/difficult to start a business
- Requesting over a million dollars to be placed in a Vietnamese bank
- Foreigners are not allowed to purchase land.
- Vietnamese people are very gentle and kind, however history to this day causes people to be very suspicious and often corrupt. It is acceptable to be untruthful in business.
- Time is of the essence: building a business relationship often requires having three meals to build a relationship before discussing business
- People do not want to discuss HIV as a business
- Foreigners are often charged much higher prices

Barriers cont.

- Many pharmacies are not regulated and carry boot legged drugs or purchased from the black market
- MOH guidelines require that a physician delivering HIV pediatric care have 5 years experience (No one in HCMC had five years pediatric HIV experience)
- All monies funding HIV/AIDS work must go to the AIDS government committee
- **The AIDS Committee Requires**
 - The foreign organization must apply and register as an NGO
 - NGO (non for profit, non government organization)
 - The foreign NGO must be partnered with a Vietnamese (NGO)
 - The partnership is organized and controlled by the AIDS committee

Why the nurse did not consider an NGO as a viable option?

- Government accepts your money
- Chooses the staff
- Develops the policies
- Investor has an opinion, but no control

Why the nurse did not consider an NGO as a viable option cont.

- Until the several years HIV was listed under social evils
- The government urged HIV + mothers to place their newborns into orphanages told they would be HIV + and too difficult to care for (75% of children will not become HIV infected even without any treatment)
- Orphanage - Kids lined up in in metal cribs, very little social interaction

Inadequate Medical Care for Twenty Children

Inadequate medical care due to limited availability of two part time Pediatric HIV specialist in a population of 5 million people

As a professional courtesy, provided free HIV care to 20 HIV infected orphans living in the villages of the Mekong Delta, hours away from the city.

- Only available for monthly visits, 1 hour/month to see all 20 children on lunch break or between his own clinics.
- No charts. Notes kept by a school teacher, school teacher dispensed meds
- Medications dose were not prescribed consistently or by weight
- Called out to the country for months at a time for epidemics. children would may not receive meds – leading to resistance.
- Children were on liver toxic meds without updated labs.
- No monitoring of monthly medications. Family often sold medications..

Unsafe practice!

Social Barriers vs. Project Barriers

What was the biggest challenge?



Stigma

- People are often shunned from family and friends if you are known to be HIV infected
- Neighbors become suspicious if a home health nurse comes to your home
- Staff nurses were shunned by nursing peers, demanding her uniform be washed separately from theirs
- Those who do not work for the government generally do not have insurance and must pay for all medical care; care is expensive. They can't ask their family for money
- Children's blood draws must be performed at the clinic and brought to the lab by the nurse, opposed to going to the lab
- The lab requests Bickford children not be present in their waiting room in fear of losing paying clients



Should We Go Home Yet?

Problem Solve
Find Solutions



The Big C Critical thinking, Creativity, Collaboration

- Built relationships in Vietnam utilizing the AIDS Clinical Trial data base to identify peers working in the HIV field in HCMC, Vietnam
- Networked with new friends and colleagues, learned about business, corruption, religion, culture, health care, the extent of discrimination and how to work around the rules when needed
- Built a collaboration with the Catholic Charities
- Identified a small group of children receiving inadequate care due to a combination of financial hardship, lack of qualified physicians and discrimination in need of financial assistance and an infrastructure
- Developed a partnership with a private for profit international multispecialty clinic. The clinic was staffed with bilingual employees and serviced the Vietnamese community

The Partnership was Instrumental in Assisting in the set Up

- Securing office space
- Locating qualified staff, arranging interviews, and assisting in determining appropriate salaries
- Purchasing office equipment at their cost
- Developing a contract to utilize their pharmacy, lab and radiology department.
- Providing specialty care for Bickford children at reasonable rates when referred for services such as GI or Cardiology

Dealing with Discrimination

- Blood is drawn by the nurse in clinic and transported to the lab
- The social worker picks up all meds from the pharmacy
- The dentist built a portable chair to bring to the clinic once a month and exams are performed in clinic
- BLCMC does not contain HIV in its name. Services are not publically advertised

Hiring and Training Staff

- Hired a pediatric ER/infectious disease physician with no HIV experience, who was willing to learn. He was trained and precepted by the nurse and one of two pediatric HIV MD's in the country
- Sent the doctor to attend HIV classes sponsored by the CDC
- The doctor developed an EMR system to allowing the nurse could monitor labs, meds, weight, etc from the states
- Two nurse were hired and trained. One attended to nursing responsibilities while the other to provided mental health counseling and social services
- Monthly staff meetings are held via computer

Developing and Maintaining Relationships

- Meet with the Deputy of Infectious Disease and the PEPFAR Director every couple of years to build a reputation
- The physician attends monthly ID CDC meetings, along side the staff who reports to the AIDS committee.
- Staff and contractors are recognized on Vietnamese holidays to continue to develop relationships
- Home visit are performed during the annual visit to the clinics to ensure the families are happy with their care as well as to gain an understanding of their needs
- The clinic has been open for six years without a threat of being shut down and still waiting to safely apply for a license

Summary

- Nurses can use critical thinking and strategic planning to overcome the most challenging barriers
- Cultural sensitivity and discrimination play a significant role in project success and improving the quality of life of others
- Developing collaborations and networking with local and global agencies is the key to overcoming road blocks
- Nurse have many opportunities and avenues to develop and implement projects in both the medical and business arena

