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Bert Vrijhoef

Study on European Nurses in Diabetes (SEND): Invitation to participate

The Federation of European Nurses in Diabetes (FEND) and Dr Bert Vrijhoef, Study Principal Investigator at Maastricht University Medical Centre, signed contracts in 2006 for performing the Study on European Nurses in Diabetes (SEND). This study will involve all nurses working in diabetes in eight European nations: Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

The SEND Study Group, consisting of DSNs from each of the countries, met for the first time in May 2008 in Amsterdam to discuss the study. Marianne Cassel-Lundberg, a member of the study group, presented the current status of SEND for the first time at the FEND meeting in September 2008 (Cassel-Lundberg, 2008).

Background to the study

The current situation among DSNs in Europe can be described as lacking both clarity and control in relation to nursing roles and titles (European Commission, 2000). Consequently, stakeholders are unable (or unwilling) to define standards of nursing practice and determine the most appropriate and cost-effective ways of delivering patient care. As a result, uncontrolled role developments and a large increase in nursing titles have occurred without systematic review or regulation, so creating confusion both within, and outside of, the nursing profession (European Commission, 2000). Furthermore, a lack of clarity regarding specialist and advanced nursing means that there is no agreement

about educational preparation for higher levels of practice. SEND was designed against this background.

Aims and outline of the study

The aim of SEND is to investigate the nature, volume, work setting, case mix and workload of diabetes nursing care in eight countries across Europe. In doing so, SEND aims to provide scientific data on the quantity and quality of the workforce of DSNs in Europe. To achieve this, this study aims to answer the following question:

What is the function of DSNs in Europe from a cross-national perspective?

This question will be answered by addressing the following four points:

- Which factors influence the quality of diabetes nursing care in Europe?
- What do function descriptions of DSNs in Europe look like?
- What is the nature, volume, work setting and the case mix of DSNs in Europe?
- What is the workload of DSNs in Europe?

SEND involves three phases. Phase I consisted of a systematic literature review undertaken by Bert Vrijhoef to answer the first question above (data submitted for publication). Phase II took place during the 2-day meeting of the SEND study group in Amsterdam in May 2008. During this meeting, representatives from each of the eight European countries participating in the study shared data on the "function descriptions" of DSNs, with the purpose of clarifying their values on the concept of

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“function description” and on the assessment tools to be applied in phase III.

Phase III of SEND (planned for early 2009) aims to provide data on the nature, volume, work setting and case mix of DSNs in Europe, as well as their experienced workload. These data will be collected by means of a postal survey involving a questionnaire, to be translated where necessary, and distributed in early 2009.

As a participating member country, all DSNs in the UK will shortly receive a questionnaire as part of this study. Study results will be presented, in the first instance, at the FEND 2009 conference in Vienna, and subsequently at other diabetes meeting around the country.

On behalf of the SEND study group, we would be very grateful of your participation and valuable contribution to the study. ■

Cassel-Lundberg M on behalf of the SEND Study Group (2008) *Study of European Nurses in Diabetes: progress so far*. Presented at the Federation of European Nurses in Diabetes (FEND) Annual Meeting, Rome, 5–6 September 2008

European Commission (2000) *Study of specialist nurses in Europe*. European Commission, Brussels

SEND is financed by FEND and the University of Maastricht. The SEND team consists of: HJM Vrijhoef, Principal Investigator, and Joyce Janssen, Research Assistant, Maastricht University, and Bep Bakker, The Netherlands; Brigitte Ostenbrink and Doris Hemmann, Germany; Rita Forde, Ireland; Malgorzate Gasiorowska, Poland; Maite Valverde, Spain; Marianne Cassel-Lundberg, Sweden; Seyda Ozcan, Turkey; Sofia Llahana and Liz Kamps, United Kingdom.

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