

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Purpose of the study**

This study investigated knowledge, perception and level of professional burnout among nurses. The awareness and way of regarding burnout exemplified the knowledge and perception of nurses while emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment characterised professional burnout.

### **Objectives of the study**

The study particularly sought to investigate nurses who engage in oncology nursing and palliative care, the care for patients with terminal illnesses. The study was conceived due to the fact that it was not known what the magnitude of burnout was in the nurses. It was also not clear whether the nurses were aware of professional burnout and how these nurses perceived burnout arising from the chronic job stress. Hence the objectives of the study were to establish the level of burnout, determine the level of knowledge and assess perception toward professional burnout among nurses caring for patients with terminal illnesses.

### **Methods**

The study was conducted through a cross-sectional study design, data being collected between August and November 2012 using a focus group discussion and questionnaires from 65 respondents selected from nurses in two health institutions; Hospice Africa Uganda and Uganda Cancer Institute. The sample size was calculated using Taro Yamane's formula. The data was analysed using descriptive, inferential and thematic analysis and presented in tables and figures. A student t-test was used to determine mean differences between the dimensions of burnout and the documented overall norms.

### **Results**

The study established that 63.08% of the nurses had high burnout, 68.52% of the factors related to burnout were known by at least 81.54% of the nurses and 67.69% of the nurses agreed that the components and characteristics that were presented to them described professional burnout. The nurses cited feelings of tiredness, work-attitude diminishment and intent to leave the profession to be characteristic of burnout from emotional stress.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

The study concluded that though the nurses' knowledge was sufficient and perception right, their prevalence (63.08%) of burnout was high. The study also recommends that nurses need education on how to apply their knowledge of burnout in their work and training on job engagement.