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Conference Abstract

“It’s in Our Veins”: Caring Natures and Material Motivations of Community Health Workers in Contexts of Economic Marginalisation

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Abstract

Khayelitsha, an economically marginal peri-urban settlement in Cape Town, is home to a number of ‘flagship’ public health interventions aimed at HIV/AIDS and TB. Alongside these high-profile, foreign donor-driven treatment and care programmes are a plethora of NGOs that provide a wide range of community-based carework. Some of these organisations are large, well-funded and well-connected globally, while others are run by a few unemployed women responding to care needs in their neighbourhoods. This article explores the ways that community health workers (CHWs) who work for these organisations understand and speak about their involvement in carework as volunteers, employees or managers of community-based care organisations. Many CHWs framed their work through discourses of gender, religion or culture (‘African-ness’). They also described forms of material or economic benefits of providing carework, but many were concerned that these might be seen as existing in tension with more socially accepted, altruistic motivations for care. We explore here how CHWs narrate and understand their roles and motivations as carers and members of a resource-constrained community.

Keywords

community health worker; South Africa; motivation; care

PowerPoint presentation

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