

Zimbabwe Clinical Officers

Author Profile:

Maria Chikono is a Clinical Officer and training coordinator for Clinical Officers in Zimbabwe. She is married and a proud parent of 4 children and 4 grandchildren. She is a practicing Adventist and enjoys reading the bible and partaking in bible study.



General Information:

The profession started in 1975 at Mpilo hospital in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

Entry Criteria:

There is no entry requirement for the CO program in Zimbabwe; however, it is recommended to have a high school A level education. In regard to required clinical experience, five years nursing experience not including midwifery training is needed. There is also an added advantage if under 50 years of age. There is no entrance examination for the program.

Education:

There is one school for CO training named Chitungwiza School of Clinical Officers. Chitungwiza School of Clinical Officers is a two-year programme and trains 10 Trainees with an average of 8 graduates. Graduates receive a practicing certificate/Diploma.

Financing Education:

There is no financing for the program. Students are required to pay on their own.

Accreditors/Regulating Bodies:

There are no current accreditors for the educational program. The MOH recognizes and helps with regulation of the profession. Nurses Council of Zimbabwe(NCZ) is the current regulatory body for the profession, but there is current lobbying in process for a CO board.

Professional Licensure:

There is a certifying exam held by Nurses Council of Zimbabwe(NCZ), eventually this will transition to the CO Council once it is created. The Health Services Board and NCZ maintains a registry of practicing COs.

Scope of Practice:

Clinical officers are nurses who undergo more training. They can diagnose and treat diseases just like doctors. They help take histories and physicals, treat, diagnose, and formulate a plan. COs are not allowed to prescribe medications unless under the supervision of a medical officer. The training of COs is expected cut mortality rates by 25%.

Maintaining Role:

Continuing Medical Education/Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requires COs to complete 12 points per year.

Job Opportunities:

There are 80 practicing CO in Zimbabwe. Very few posts exist in the country as most were frozen by the MOH.

References:

1. 31 Clinical Officers Graduate. The Herald Zimbabwe. 2021. Accessed February 28, 2021. <https://www.herald.co.zw/31-clinical-officers-graduate/>
2. ARK launches "Safe Arrivals" health programme in Zimbabwe. ARK. Accessed February 28, 2021.
3. Chitungwiza Central Hospital. Accessed February 28, 2021. <https://cch.org.zw/school-of-nursing-department/>