

**Advanced and Specialist Nursing in Ireland (Primary Care):
An exploration of professional and organisational issues.**

Abstract (2007)

This study explored the organisational and professional issues affecting Advanced Nurse Practitioners (Primary Care) and Clinical Nurse Specialists (General Practice) within the Republic of Ireland and considers the implications for management, education and clinical practice.

The data collection method chosen was semi-structured interview with analysis undertaken using a qualitative thematic approach. The sample was obtained from the data base of accredited Advanced Nurse Practitioners (Primary Care) and Clinical Nurse Specialists (General Practice) held by The National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery.

The phenomenological approach adopted explored the “lived experiences” of ANP and CNS within the primary care sector and following data analysis, major organisational and professional issues were identified.

Major organisational themes identified included;

- the importance of supportive professional relationships within primary care,
- nursing aspects and influence on service development and
- enabling factors and barriers affecting advanced and specialist practice.

Major professional themes identified include;

- role development for advanced and specialist practice,
- competency attainment and maintenance and
- underpinned by professional value systems.

Findings indicated that organisational and professional issues are interlinked and suggested that advanced and specialist nurses possess intuitive organisational knowledge and utilise their social network and professional value systems to maximise patient and service outcomes within primary care. The study identified issues relating to workload pressures, professional isolation and educational deficits that inhibit development of clinical career pathways for advanced and specialist nurses within this sector.

The commonality and divergent themes between CNS (General Practice) and ANP(Primary Care) were identified.

- Issues relating to attainment of core clinical and professional competencies due to workload pressures and lack of time.
- Continuing education requirements indicated that ANP required clinical updates at advanced practice level, with CNS requiring access to specialist Higher Diplomas and education that accredits prior learning.
- Both cohorts identified a need for professional peer support frameworks; CNS required a Professional and Service Development forum and ANP a Practice Development Forum.
- Divergent themes centered on ongoing role development, for ANPs the ongoing need to promote the role and CNSs requested further development of negotiation skills.

Policy makers, managers, clinicians and educationalists can further enable effective fulfilment of advanced and specialists nursing practice roles through recognising the unique personal and professional skills set required to work within this sector and addressing the deficits that have been identified within this study.

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