Investigating The Impact of Advanced Nurse Practitioners in an Acute Medical Setting

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Advanced Nurse Practice

‘An advanced nurse practitioner (ANP) is a registered nurse who has acquired the expert knowledge base, complex decision-making skills and clinical competencies for expanded practice.’

International council for nurses (2007)
Why Conduct this Study?

5 ANPs’ Appointed in Acute Medical wards

- Perform duties previously associated with junior doctors
- Skills in physical examination, diagnosis and prescribing.
- Aim to provide continuity of care for patients and act as a resource for ward staff
• Very little work has been done to clarify the role of the ANP, what impact they have on patient care and whether they are valued by nursing and medical colleagues.

• ANPs may benefit patients by reducing unnecessary admissions to ITU/HDU, reducing length of hospital stay and potentially impacting on patient survival rates.

• This study addresses these important areas and represents groundwork for a future larger study.
Aim
To identify the role of the Advanced Nurse Practitioner and the impact they have on the care of patients in an acute medical setting.

Setting: Five medical wards in CMFT

Participants: Five Advanced Nurse Practitioners
Five Patients
Fourteen Ward Based Nurses
Plus, opportunistic interviews with four consultants, twelve ward based nurses and five AHPs during the course of the observation study
Design and Method
There were three linked stages

Phase 1
- Literature review
- Observation of ANPs (which informed the interviews)
- Opportunistic interviews

Phase 2
- Interviews with ANPs
- Interviews with patients
- Interviews with nurses working with ANPs

Phase 3
- Analysis
- Writing Report
- Dissemination of Findings

Additional data are being collected on Length of Stay, Admissions to HDU/ITU and Discharge Planning
Results of the ward nurse interviews

• Role ambiguity
  – Worked as doctors but with benefit of nursing background.
  – Did not really do much “nursing”

• Enhanced communication
  
  — *They tend to know more with regards to how we go about treating a patient. They're able to sort of pass the information on more clearer than a medic would be able to.*
  
  *(Staff Nurse)*
• Facilitating patient care ensuring continuity

  “The care I think, it's much slicker. It's just always... There's none of the kind of having to bleep people, we know when [ANP’s] here, [ANP's] always based on the ward, and the fact that he/she's from a nursing background as well I think makes the... [ANP's] kind of that halfway house in betwe-... So he/she knows where you're coming from from a nursing point of view, which I think although medical students do come and do a little bit of a block on a ward, I don't think they get a true feeling of what it's like being on the other end. So I think [ANP's] got a good understanding of what it's like to be a nurse, and trying to get things done, written up, prescribed and... so we can actually do our job effectively.” (Sister)
• Reassuring presence particularly in a critical situation
  – “ANP can deal with the situation immediately, and [ANP] ringing the doctors to come to review the patient, they will come much quicker than they will with the nurses on the ward ringing to...And usually [ANP's] done everything anyway in preparation, [ANP's] done all the blood tests, [ANP’s] done the ECG, ordered chest X-ray, so all those things have usually been done before the doctors actually get to the ward. So it... you know, you... you're not wasting as much time.” (Ward Manager)
• Role model and mentor
  – “...Because when the Junior Doctors start and they've got absolutely no knowledge at all of what the wa-... of patients on the ward and what... you know, how things work, it's... you know, they're asking him/her every five minutes, you know erm...(Ward Manager)
  – He/she has built my confidence up quite a lot actually, because at the end, if they are seeing you ...... And he/she will call nurses towards him, and say 'Come here. What do you think of this? And what do you think should be done?' So not only is he/she doing his job, as he/she is doing it ..... If there is something interesting going on he/she does tend to grab one of us and you know....”(Staff Nurse)
Results of the Patient Interviews

• Only 5 Patients were interviewed but all recognised the ANP as the nurse who had explained complex investigations.

• Feeling Informed
  – “I've had quite a lot of tests. Erm... They do... They do explain to you what they're for, and they do give you printed information...... They will all reassure you, but I think the one that will tell you everything about it would be your Advanced, because he/she... I think he/she knows more, because he's/she’s advanced, ....” (patient)
• Confidence in continuity
  – The nurses were viewed as a constant presence on the ward and the doctors were not. The patients had confidence in the ANPs knowledge of patients.

  “[ANP] is a person that he/she likes to... He/she likes to know the person, he/she likes to be able... If somebody sprung it on him/her, and said, 'What about the patient in bed 7?' ‘Oh yes, that's [name]. Blah blah blah.' And he/she could tell you all about them.” (patient)

• Interesting, because the ward nurses all thought the ANPs did not really practice nursing
Results of the ANP interviews

• Felt that expectations of their role had not been defined by the organisation.
• Felt that their MSc did not adequately prepare them for clinical role.
• Filled gaps identified in medical and nursing service provision.
• Felt able to combine complementary roles of medicine and nursing
Felt they provided holistic care for patients by;

- Using their knowledge and skills to coordinate and expedite nursing, medical and AHP care
- Ensuring patients understand their planned care
- Using their networks to ensure timely investigations and results
- Challenging traditions that would keep patients in hospital for prolonged periods
- Actively decreasing length of stay
- Identifying and acting upon breaches of protocol particularly in relation to EWS
“Opportunistic Interviews”
What was said about ANPs during the observation

Junior Doctors Say “They are Supportive and Provide Continuity”

AHPs Say “They Know What’s Going On with the Patients”

Consultants Say, “Didn’t want them! Now they are Pivotal and Provide Continuity, we want more”

Nurses Say “Inspirational, Provide Continuity, Aspirational”
Challenges

• How do you prepare for a role that is not clearly defined?
• Anticipating and resolving antagonism and potential role conflict.
• Dependency of nurses on the ANPs’ could impede their development.
  
  – “You've got a problem, take it to [respondent]. Don't matter what kind of problem it is, [respondent] will sort it out. Which if I can be of help I will be, I have no problem..... The negative aspect of that is that they stop, at times, thinking about the problem and seeing if they can resolve it themselves to begin with before they bring it with you.” (ANP)

  – “And I'm so reluctant to say this, because I'm so grateful for everything [ANP]'s done, if anything he/she might slightly de-skill me, in that I think oh, that's a difficult blood, I'll ask [ANP] to take it. Oh, that's a difficult procedure, but [ANP]'s here..... I think it's probably too easy for me to rely on him/her... (sister)
All the ANPs practised in a different way because their ward environments were different and yet there were easily identifiable key elements to their role.

So What Is The Role of an Advanced Nurse Practitioner?
Conclusion of 23 interviews and 86 hours of observation

The ANP is a Lynchpin

- Pivotal to facilitating every aspect of patient care
- Is a resource for nurses, junior doctors, AHPs & patients
- Provides continuity of care and carer
- Is a Role Model and Mentor
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