

Self-employed Nurse Entrepreneurs
Expanding the realm of nursing
practice:
A Journey of Discovery

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- Appendix III.III** Wilson, A. (2000). Nurse Practitioners on the Move. South Australian Nurses' Conference: a celebration of nursing. Ausmed Publications: Adelaide, 8th September.
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Abstract

Private practice as a career option for nurses has been slowly increasing since the 1980's. However, the reasons for this development have not been fully investigated so that it can be understood and placed within the changing contexts of health care and health services. The expansion and extension of nurses' roles is a contemporary topic in health care reform and therefore one that deserves investigation. The aims of this study were to develop a theory on private practice nursing and to describe the characteristics and work of the self-employed nurse in Australia. Nurses working in a variety of settings have been able to provide information on being self-employed. In doing so, this study was able to describe the persona of the nurse entrepreneur, explore the reasons why nurses and midwives in Australia establish private fee-for-service practices, identify the factors which have influenced this action and describe the scope of practice of nurses and midwives in private practice.

This combined Delphi technique and Grounded Theory study is the first in-depth study of Australian nurses and midwives in private practice. The study enables nurses to provide direct information on being self-employed and enhances the profession's ability to articulate about this area of nursing. The significance of the research is in increasing the understanding of this area of practice development and affords greater insight into its efforts to improve and maintain quality nursing services within the Australian health care system.

One hundred and six nurses and midwives were invited to participate in the study, in which participants completed two rounds of semi-structured postal questionnaires. Delphi technique was applied to rate responses on Likert scales to ascertain respondents' consensus on certain topics. Participants were also provided the opportunity to make additional comments. Results indicated that nurses in private practice are well experienced with an

average of 21 years nursing experience and hold several qualifications. Job satisfaction, being able to be more involved in achieving quality health outcomes and maximising skills and abilities are significant influences for private practice. These results suggest that private practice nursing can contribute effectively to broadening the range of primary health services available to the population and to addressing the issues of retention and recruitment of nurses. Self-employed nurse entrepreneurs push the boundaries of the profession and expand the realm of nursing practice.

Entrepreneurship is a path for the future of nursing as it offers expanded career opportunities for nurses and opportunities for increased ambulatory health services. In addition, the broad, expert knowledge nurses' hold on many aspects of health can be disseminated throughout the health sector to the advantage of corporate health partners. There is further development required in this innovative and expanding area of the nursing profession.

Candidate's Certification

THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE



This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University library, being made available for photocopying and loan.

Signed ...Anne Wilson.....
Anne Wilson

Date ...04/03/2003.....

Dedication

To my mother, who encouraged me to strive forward, and not to be held back.

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Finally, I acknowledge the dedication and commitment of the nurse entrepreneurs who generously gave their valuable time to this study. This thesis is their story and I hope they, as individual nurse entrepreneurs and their work are better understood as a result of this research.

Epilogue: Semi-Fictitious Story

Family life

The children have just come in from school, traipsing wet and muddy shoes over the laundry floor, which I cleaned only a few hours ago. Fortunately the biscuits and chocolate milk are on the kitchen table, just inside the door, so they don't need to walk all over the kitchen floor as well. As they eat, I unpack their school bags. Inside, apart from the remains of their lunch, are invoices for this term's extra resources and fees for school camp. These are added to the in-tray on the desk in the study for my husband to process later when he comes home from work. In the meantime, the children and I go out to feed the animals and bring the cows in for milking.

The barbecue

Sunday was Fathers' Day. The children are up early getting their surprise for their dad ready. Don's and my parents are coming around and we are going to have a lunch time barbecue. I am kept busy all morning preparing food. We all have good appetites. Don cooks a great barbecue and we all hoe in with gusto. Afterwards, the boys persuade their grandfather to play a game of tennis on the half court. Suddenly, over coffee, Don says the words that were to change our lives dramatically; "I won't be going in to work tomorrow". The seriousness on his face indicates he is not just having a day off. The bombshell drops. On Friday afternoon, he had received a golden handshake.

Family conference

Anxiously, we gather to discuss the crisis. The handshake was not so golden. What now we wonder? Three children with school to finish, a farm that is just getting on its feet and so

provides minimal income. I have no alternative but to return to work. But how will I manage? The thought of working in a hospital again and doing a hospital refresher course is just incomprehensible after having spent most of my nursing career in the community. In my final job, I had injured myself and after ten months off I had decided to take a break from nursing for a while to concentrate on the kids.

Looking at options

Sue and I meet for coffee when I go in to do the weekly shopping. It is good to air it all and talk to another woman, someone else my age and at my stage in life. The prospect of establishing a business does not seem so daunting. What are my skills? What do I have to offer?

I discuss my thoughts with Don and then the family. Don is supportive; my parents cannot conceive what I want to do. An analysis of my strengths, weaknesses, skills and qualities gives me confidence. Following preparation of a business plan I feel ready to proceed.

The big wide world

Reality is starting to hit. We are not the only farmers having trouble making ends meet and with a cash flow problem. Progress is slow. After all, health care is free isn't it? You do not have to pay for it. In six months, I have spent as much as I dare on advertising. Now I have to sit back and wait.

At last, I had a telephone call yesterday. She had kept my ad on the fridge for 5 months. It was starting to go yellow.