ROLE OF THE GERONTOLOGICAL NURSE PRACTITIONER IN AUSTRALIA

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ABSTRACT

The role of an aged care nurse practitioner (ACNP) is well recognised internationally however, in Australia, the implementation of this advanced role is still in its infancy with few gerontological nursing experts registered as nurse practitioners (NP). This single Victorian facility 2002 study was the first to consider the role of an ACNP in Australia and the first to describe the clinical and social benefits or otherwise of ACNP interventions in an Australian context. NP Studies in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) from 1999 – 2002 investigated the role in other nursing domains followed by an ACNP study conducted over 2004-2005. A subsequent national ACNP study in 2005 provided complementary results to this first Australian ACNP study which created the framework for these subsequent projects.

This study aimed to establish: clinical or other outcomes that a gerontological nurse practitioner (ACNPs) could achieve for older persons in an Australian residential aged care facility, factors that impacted upon the introduction of such a role, a definition of the role and to establish whether such a role would benefit older persons in Australia.

Various methods were used to determine the numerous outcomes which were to be studied in this project. A quantitative analysis of the functional and social status of residents who participated in the project, pre and post the ANCP interventions was undertaken. A quantitative analysis of the satisfaction of residents or their representatives pre and post the interventions is also presented. A qualitative analysis via focus groups, of the views of staff, residents and health professionals involved in the project was undertaken. Hospital rates pre and post the interventions and case studies are presented as additional information only.
The team involved in this Victorian Government Department of Human Services funded aged care nurse practitioner project at Greensborough Private Nursing Home included this researcher, the ACNP candidate, the Director of Nursing (DON) and Deputy DON. The team jointly managed the complex legal framework, to ensure interventions were implemented safely for all residents with the support of the residents’ general practitioners and other health professionals working for the nursing home.

Statistically significant improvements in the resident’s functional and social status were demonstrated for residents treated by the ACNP. Additionally, the resident and representative satisfaction survey revealed a higher overall level of satisfaction with the home following the project’s completion. The results demonstrated that the ACNPs’ interventions were of high quality, led to improvements in resident health outcomes, improved residents’ quality of life and reduced hospitalisation rates. This was achieved by intervening in a timely manner when residents required relief of their physical and psychological symptoms through targeted interventions and one-on-one specialist medical nursing attention.

In summary, this study identified interventions an ACNP could undertake and therefore the role they could play in an Australian residential aged care facility, given the national legislation governing all aspects of an aged care facility. This study demonstrated that the role was feasible and achieved positive resident outcomes despite the factors that impeded its introduction.
Signed statement of certification

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 to Caroline Lee 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.

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Role Of The Gerontological Nurse Practitioner In Australia
Acknowledgements

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## Glossary of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACFI</td>
<td>Aged care funding instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged Care</td>
<td>In the context used in this thesis, the residential aged care environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged Care Nurse Practitioner (ACNP) - role and parameters of practice</td>
<td>This term is used to describe both ACNPs identified in various studies and aged care nurse practitioner candidates involved in this study and others as described. ACNP practice refers to therapeutic medication management, diagnostic investigation management, referrals to medical specialists, and all nursing care of the aged care residents of this home. All ACNP practices are undertaken in partnership with the multidisciplinary team. Clinical practice guidelines written in 2004 based on the ACNP Project funded from 2002-2003 by the Victorian Department of Human Services, provide the framework of practice for the ACNP role. The equivalent term used to refer to an Aged Care Nurse Practitioner is Gerontological or Geriatric Nurse Practitioner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved provider</td>
<td>A body that is approved under the Aged Care Act 1997 by the Commonwealth to provide services to older persons in a residential aged care facility that receives Commonwealth funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSL</td>
<td>Blood sugar level</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCF</td>
<td>Congestive Cardiac Failure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client</td>
<td>The recipient of an aged care service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPG</td>
<td>Clinical Practice Guideline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON, ADON, DDON</td>
<td>Director of Nursing, Assistant Director of Nursing, Deputy Director of Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geriatrics</td>
<td>Sick elderly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerontology</td>
<td>The study of dependent elderly</td>
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<tr>
<td>GLNP or GNP</td>
<td>Gerontological or Geriatric Nurse Practitioner – the equivalent term used to refer to an Aged Care Nurse Practitioner</td>
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<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>General Medical Practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICU</td>
<td>Intensive Care Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IM</td>
<td>Intra muscular (injection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>Medical practitioner (may include GPs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Medical Practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIDDM</td>
<td>Non-insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>Nurse Practitioner</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCs</td>
<td>Personal Carers, personal workers, nursing assistants, assistants in nursing – non-registered care staff employed by aged care facilities to provide services to residents of a basic nursing nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEG</td>
<td>Percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per</td>
<td>For each one; apiece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>After…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Prior to …</td>
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<tr>
<td>RACF</td>
<td>A residential aged care facility which is federally funded to provide quality care services to older persons who have been assessed by a recognised Aged Care Assessment service as requiring residential care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCS</td>
<td>Resident classification scale</td>
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<tr>
<td>RDNS</td>
<td>Royal District Nursing Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Re</td>
<td>Regarding …</td>
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<tr>
<td>RN</td>
<td>Registered Nurses as registered under various bodies in Australian States and other countries, including the Victorian Nurses Board in Victoria, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RN Div 2</td>
<td>Registered Nurse Division 2 (in Victoria) – the equivalent of an Enrolled Nurse in other States or Territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTI</td>
<td>Urinary Tract Infection</td>
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