

The experience of being an advanced
practice nurse within Australian acute
care settings: A systematic review of
qualitative evidence

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Metasynthesis

Qualitative research

Phenomenology

Context

Abstract

Background: Shortages of health care professionals and an ageing nursing workforce are some of the factors leading to the creation and evolution of many new nursing roles. Advanced practice nurses across the globe are working under many different titles and within various contexts, in order to address gaps within current health care systems. Comparison of roles between countries is difficult and possibly inappropriate due to Australia's unique environmental and demographic characteristics. A context-specific systematic review on the qualitative evidence of the experience of being an advanced practice nurse in Australia has not been undertaken previously, however it is imperative for nursing managers and leaders to understand the complexities of advanced nursing roles in order to effectively utilise and retain these experienced and valuable nurses.

Aim: This study aims to provide deeper understanding of the experience of being an advanced practice nurse working in Australian acute settings and identify personal, professional and organisational factors influencing experiences.

Methods: A three-step search strategy, following the Joanna Briggs Institute method was used to identify published and unpublished interpretive studies meeting set inclusion criteria. Critical appraisal and data extraction were completed the Joanna Briggs Institute Qualitative Assessment and Review Instruments.

Results: Following the search and appraisal process, four studies were assessed as meeting the inclusion criteria and from these, 216 findings were extracted. Six meta-syntheses under the headings of expert knowledge, confidence, education, relationships, negative experiences and patient centered experience were formed from the findings.

Conclusion: This review has increased our understanding about the experience of being an advanced practice nurse in Australian acute care settings and provided evidence of the role being multifactorial and complex. The patient is central to the APN experience but organisational factors impact and influence their experience also. Health care organisations must be aware of the impact they have on the nurse's experience if they are to commit to nurse retention and patient safety. Nurses must continue to improve articulating their experiences in order to quantify the more intangible aspects of their practice.

Implications: There is a pragmatic aspect to this review as implications for practice are specific to the functioning of the advanced practice nurse in the Australian acute care environment. The complexity of the role has been highlighted which may assist to inform future research into other aspects of APN practice.

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Statement of Originality

I, Mary-Anne Ramis certify that this work is original and does not contain any material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other university or tertiary institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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

Signed:

Date:

Acknowledgements

Through my time as a student, I have had the opportunity to read many Acknowledgement pages from other theses and have found them to be informative, interesting and often, inspiring. Now that it is my turn I feel a sense of responsibility to do the same.

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The completion of this thesis coincides with another milestone in my life – November 2012 will be my 'five-year cancer survival' milestone. I know that at that time I will become an official healthcare statistic and I can honestly say that I feel I am a living example of evidence-based healthcare (both quantitative and qualitative!). I believe very strongly in the process of improving healthcare and know that without the devoted people involved in all aspects of research and

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"Neither common sense nor science can proceed without departing from the strict consideration of what is actual in experience."

Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) (as cited by Schuetz, 1953, p. 1)