

GUEST EDITORIAL

Getting to Where We Are Today: Advanced Nursing Practice in the United States

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In 2015, nurse practitioners (NPs) in the United States (US) celebrated the 50th anniversary of the NP movement. A small class of registered nurses prepared for an advanced nursing practice (ANP) role in 1965, building upon their expertise in public health and prevention. Today there are approximately 205 000 NPs who provide health care services to diverse populations, historically to the underserved and vulnerable – the poor, elderly, children, rural and inner city areas, immigrants, and minorities. Barriers to full practice authority for all NPs impact access to care but awareness campaigns help educate the public and legislators about NPs and their scope of practice. And combined with active persistent advocacy, old laws can be changed and new ones enacted that promote ANP.

Advancements in the area of education ensure that NPs are prepared to meet national standards and core and population-focused competencies for licensure and certification, thus assuring a minimum level of training for new NP graduates from accredited academic programs. The majority of NPs in the US are still prepared through master's education, but the recommendation from the American Asso-

ciation of Colleges of Nursing to require a clinical doctorate (the Doctor of Nursing Practice [DNP] degree) for entry into ANP has steadily gained acceptance over more than a decade among nurses as well as from other disciplines. The DNP-prepared nurse acquires the knowledge and skills necessary to lead interprofessional teams in system changes that improve the quality of care and health outcomes for patients, using an evidence-based practice framework.

Nurse practitioners play a pivotal role in the US health professions' workforce and have consistently demonstrated innovation, efficiency, effectiveness, and cost savings. NPs are trained to be full partners in managing acute and chronic conditions for diverse populations in different settings. Outcomes of NP practice support the integration of their role into existing and new models of care delivery. NPs are qualified to participate on boards that determine future directions for health care delivery.

The articles that give an overview of the first 50 years of NP practice in the US:

1. Edmunds M. Nurse practitioner pioneers – Celebrating 50 years of role development. *J Nurse Pract* 2015;11(6):578-95.
2. Ralston B, Collier TH, Fairman J. *Am J Nurs* 2015;115(10):54-7.
3. Saver C. 50 years of NP excellence. *Nurse Pract* 2015;40(5):15-21.

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