Creating Healthy Work Environments 2019

Bridging the Skill Set Gap of Emergency Department Nurse Practitioners

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Abstract

This project explores what is needed to expand a qualified emergency department (ED) nurse practitioners (NP) work force in central Florida. With only 233 certified emergency nurse practitioners (ENPs) nationwide and the increasingly aging emergency physician cadre, there is a growing gap between the need and supply of ED providers (American Academy of Nurse Practitioners National Certification Board, Inc, 2018). Family Nurse Practitioners (FNPs) frequently are expanding staffing the ED. However, current FNP curriculum and training prepares them well for primary care which may or may not translate to the ED. This can lead to underutilization and underprepared providers. Postgraduate fellowships expand and fortify medical professionals’ knowledge and skillset, in a specialized area of interest. This project examines the expected skillset FNPs need for work in the emergency department as a component to design a formal post graduate FNP to ENP fellowship.

Two focus groups were held to investigate the skillset utilization and expectations of FNPs hired to work in central Florida EDs. The findings from these groups reflect current literature: FNPs in the ED are largely underutilized due to the uncertainty about their role, scope of practice (SOP) guidelines, and the lack of proper training. The project is guided by the Johns Hopkins Nursing Evidence-Based Practice model and the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) improvement process with the goal of establishing community perceived curricular needs for a formal post-graduate fellowship program for FNPs who wish to practice in the ED setting. These fellowships will not only improve FNPs’ knowledge and skillset; by gaining more skills, FNPs will be better utilized in the ED as their role and preparation will be clearly established. The quality of patient care along with wait times and satisfaction will improve as a result of high quality Post Graduate Fellowship increasing a quality workforce in emergency care.

Title:
Bridging the Skill Set Gap of Emergency Department Nurse Practitioners

Keywords:
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References:


**Abstract Summary:**

This project focuses on the need for more qualified emergency department (ED) nurse practitioners (NPs) in central Florida. With only 233 certified emergency nurse practitioners (ENPs) nationwide and the increasingly aging emergency physician workforce, there is an obvious discrepancy between the need and supply of ED providers.

**Content Outline:**

Bridging the Skillset Gap of Emergency Department Nurse Practitioners: Establishing the Need for a Formal Postgraduate Emergency Nurse Practitioner Fellowship Program

**Content Outline**

1. Introduction
   1. This project aims to illuminate the need for more qualified emergency department (ED) nurse practitioners (NPs) in central Florida
   2. It is imperative that more resources are allocated to substantiate and implement a formal Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) to Emergency Nurse Practitioner (ENP) fellowship program in central Florida.

2. Body

1. Main Point #1: Insufficient amount of ENPs and ED MDs in central Florida to meet the ED demand
   A. Supporting Point #1: Need and Supply
      a. With only 233 certified emergency nurse practitioners (ENPs) nationwide and the aging emergency physician workforce, there is an obvious discrepancy between the need and supply of ED providers (American Academy of Nurse Practitioners National Certification Board, Inc, 2018).
      b. In 2014, the total US ED visits were 141.4 million- approximately 45.1 visits per 100 persons (Jairmadas, 2018).
   B. Supporting Point #2: The number of practicing emergency physicians
      a. In Florida, the number of actively practicing EMPs is 2,455. Specifically, the sum of the actively practicing EMPs in Hillsborough and Pinellas counties is 315 (Florida Department of Health, 2016).
      b. Thus, the solution is either to lure in and prepare more physicians, whose preparation would take an average of 11 years, costing approximately $140,000, or create a more time and cost feasible bridge program for FNPs to gain the necessary skills and certification and become fully functional providers in the ED (Jairmadas, 2018).

2. Main Point #2: FNPs are a great choice to fill this gap, but do they have the appropriate training for the ED setting?
   A. Supporting Point #1: FNPs are trained to care for patients of all ages
a. Family nurse practitioners (FNPs) hold approximately 60% of NP certifications in the US; their training is catered toward primary care and centers around the family unit.

b. Adult and acute NPs are not necessarily qualified to work in the ED setting either due to their preparation or population age restrictions.

B. Supporting Point #2: Coverage

a. Scope of Practice (SOP) challenges for FNPs working in the ED

b. Malpractice coverage for procedures not covered by SOP

3. Main Point #3: ED NP underutilization

A. Supporting Point #1: Uncertainty about the NP role

a. The inconsistencies in NP preparation and understanding of their role leaves them widely underutilized. Despite the fact that NPs have been practicing since the 1960s, there remains confusion by the public and even health care professionals about their role, scope of practice, and capabilities (Doetzel, Rankin, & Then, 2016).

b. With nationwide resident shortages and decreasing resident hours, the NPs have been called upon to expand their scope of practice to encompass patients with immediate and critical conditions and to perform quick procedures (Varghese, Silvestri, & Lopez, 2012).

B. Supporting Point #2: NP services associated with improved outcomes

a. NP services were associated with a high level of patient satisfaction, decreased waiting times, improved pain management and communication (Griffin & McDevitt, 2016)

b. Besides patient satisfaction, literature findings also suggest that the NP services are received positively by colleagues even though many are unsure of the exact extent of skillset utilization (Bryson, 2016).

III. Conclusion

1. Evidence has shown that the FNP role in the ED is not exactly understood at this time, which has led to the inconsistency in FNP skillset utilization.

2. A careful review of the differences in the competency lists for FNPs and ENPs yielded clear understanding that FNPs need extra course work, clinical preparation and certification to be fully-functional providers in the ED setting.

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**Professional Experience:** I have been a nurse since 2013, working in a variety of settings from LTAC to acute care and home health. As a nurse practitioner, I have worked in a primary and urgent care setting. Currently, I am working on my DNP degree and preparing to sit in for the emergency nurse practitioner boards as I am interested in expanding my experience and skillset. My ultimate goal is to be a well prepared and fully-functional provider in the emergency department.

**Author Summary:** Savina Gonzalez is a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) student at the University of South Florida and a member of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners as well as the American Academy of Emergency Nurse Practitioners. She is currently certified as a Family Nurse Practitioner whose research is focused on better understanding and perhaps helping mainstream the role of the FNPs in the emergency department setting.

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**Professional Experience:** Dr. Ling has presented or published over two dozen times in the last 5 years regarding the needs of military spouses, children and veterans. She has served as a consultant to Office of the Secretary of Defense – Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness Division of Spouse Education and Career Opportunity regarding Military spouse employment and well-being. As the child of a combat veteran, the spouse of an active duty service member for 20 years and the mother of 2 military children, Dr Ling is uniquely qualified to speak to the rigors of military life and the impact on the family.

**Author Summary:** Dr Catherine Ling is a Fellow of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners. Her research focuses on functional capacity in vulnerable populations and translatable research through symptom phenotyping. One population of emphasis is military families. Her teaching scholarship and clinical practice emphasize increasing functional capacity for communities, students and patients. Dr. Ling continues to maintain active clinical practice as a Family Nurse Practitioner.