Clinical competence is the core of nurse practitioner (NP) practice. High-quality clinical education is crucial to the development of NP competence. One survey conducted at a national NP conference revealed that only 10% felt well prepared after completing their NP education while 51% felt only somewhat or minimally prepared (Hart, 2006). NP educators need to consider and apply available evidence to improve student outcomes and change outdated requirements.

**Introduction**

Clinical competence is the core of nurse practitioner (NP) practice. High-quality clinical education is crucial to the development of NP competence. One survey conducted at a national NP conference revealed that only 10% felt well prepared after completing their NP education while 51% felt only somewhat or minimally prepared (Hart, 2006). NP educators need to consider and apply available evidence to improve student outcomes and change outdated requirements.

**Purpose**

To present controversial issues related to clinical preparation of NPs. Evidence on the four issues will be presented and discussed, including: registered nurse (RN) experience prior to NP preparation, requirements for a minimum number of hours of supervised direct patient care during which they can practice clinical skills, students preparing for practice with a single age group population (e.g., pediatric NPs who care for only children), and students preparing for practice with a single age group population (e.g., Family NPs who care for only adults).

**Background**

NP preparation requires not only financial support for NPs. Evidence on the four issues will be presented and discussed, including: registered nurse (RN) experience prior to NP preparation, requirements for a minimum number of hours of supervised direct patient care during which they can practice clinical skills, students preparing for practice with a single age group population (e.g., pediatric NPs who care for only children), and students preparing for practice with a single age group population (e.g., Family NPs who care for only adults).

**What is the evidence?**

Most existing studies were conducted in the 1980s and early 1990s and focused on academic performance using grade point averages, as an example. The most recent study published was published approximately 10 years ago and was a cross-sectional correlational study examining duration of prior RN experience and level of NP clinical skills in practice. Data based on 116 NPs suggested no significant correlation between RN experience and NP skills while the same data from their collaborating physicians suggested a negative correlation.

**Background**

Accreditors require NP programs in the US to provide clinical requirements. Is the best recommendation 500 hours? Do the evidence-based standards for NP clinical education.

**References**