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"The Lived Experience of New Graduate Nurse Practitioners Who Participated in an Academic-Based Fellowship Program"

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Background of Problem



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- Role transition from RN to novice NP can be a time of:
 - major stress
 - uncertainty and confusion
 - lost confidence in their ability to practice(Barnes, 2015a)
- Described as **exciting, overwhelmed, ambivalence, isolation** and **longing to return to one's prior role**
(Barnes, 2015b)

Background of Problem



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- The stress of adapting to a new role increased turnover rates, ***leading to NP shortages*** in some settings (Faraz, 2016)
- Transition from RN to NP role begins after graduation when the novice NP enters the workforce and ***may take up to two years*** (Brykczynski, 2009; Heitz, Steiner & Burman, 2004)
- Faculty support is a ***critical component*** to successful transition to the NP role by staying connected and being a mentor to new graduates (Kelly & Mathews, 2001; Poronsky, 2013)

Review of Literature



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- **Veterans Health Administration (VHA)**
 - Residency NP program exposed novice NPs to a broad range of patient (in both primary and specialty care) and provider contacts
 - Increased their clinical experience in caring for complex conditions and also allowed them to network with a greater number of peers
(Goudreau et al., 2011)

Review of Literature



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- **Family Health Center (Worcester, MA)**
 - 12 month NP residency program that included both a didactic component as well as precepted clinical sessions (Sargent & Olmedo, 2013)
- **Retail clinic in the northeastern US**
 - 12 month residency program in collaboration with an academic partner
 - Participants of this program were employed throughout the country
 - Program was conducted mostly online utilizing webinars and clinical case conferences and focused on increasing clinical and business competence
 - Additionally participants were paired with a local mentor/preceptor
 - All participants viewed the collaboration positively (Thabault, Mylott & Patterson, 2015)

Purpose



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- The primary purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to identify facilitators and barriers of the successful transition to FNP clinical practice.
- A secondary purpose was to evaluate the effectiveness of this unique academic-based NP Fellowship designed and implemented by the researchers to ease the transition to practice for their former FNP students.

Problem Statement



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- While existing employer-based NP residency programs have demonstrated positive results, many novice NPs elect to work for independent practices or work in smaller communities where residency programs are not available.
- This study sought to fill a gap in the literature to meet the needs of these new graduate NPs.

Research Question and Significance



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- The research question for this study was: ***What is the lived experience of family nurse practitioners' transition into clinical practice?***
- Little is known about NP-specific “transition to practice” programs that originate from academia
- Some employers offer NP residencies or “transition to practice” orientations, but they have very limited, competitive enrollment and only open to those they employ
- It is important to determine the benefits of offering an ***academic-based solution*** for a greater number of NP graduates prior to or concurrent with their first NP employment

Methods



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Academic-Based Nurse Practitioner Fellowship Program

- In 2015, two NP faculty established an academic-based NP fellowship
- No local health care organization offers a residency program for NPs
- A four-month fellowship program consisted of four evening meetings (one meeting each month from June through September)
 - Meetings were titled ***First Job, Getting Started, Showing Your Value, and Giving Back***
- Fifteen newly graduated NPs attended anywhere from 1-4 meetings
 - New NP graduates were notified about each general topic but most importantly they were allowed to discuss their experiences as new graduates
 - Some had a relatively smooth transition while others were questioning their decision making skills and abilities
- Previous quantitative study:
 - All valued the support and comradery the fellowship provided
 - The fellowship received overwhelmingly positive reviews from participants
 - Greater ease of transition by those who participated as opposed of those who did not

Methods



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- Qualitative descriptive study
 - Gain an understanding of the first-year transitional experiences of FNP's who participated in the academic-based fellowship program
- Institutional Review Board approval secured
- Focus group (N=5) was conducted for approx. 2 hours on campus
 - 3 participants remained in their first NP position and 2 either changed positions or were planning to over the next few weeks
 - Faculty researchers took notes during the focus group
 - Analysis of themes was conducted independently at first and then collaboratively to finalize themes

Interview Questions



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- Describe your first year in practice.
- What parts of your transition were successful? What parts were challenging? Why?
- Why did you think you were successful? Was there something specific that prepared you?
- How did you overcome the challenges? What resources if any would have helped you achieve an easier transition in that experience?
- What would you do differently over this past year in regards to your transition?
- Describe the support you received from your organization.
- What recommendations would you make to a new NP graduate?
- What benefits if any did you gain from participation in the NP fellowship?

Demographics



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- All were female, 4 of 5 were Caucasian
- All were FNP's for 1 year
 - None of the participants were employed in the same clinics which ranged from family practice to specialty care (i.e. cardiovascular, HIV/AIDS, aesthetics)
- All were former peers and former students of the faculty researchers
- Ages ranged from 30-55
- All had at least 5 years of prior practice as a Registered Nurse
 - 2 had at least 15 years of experience

Findings



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- Three themes described the essence of the NPs transition to their first year in practice
 - *Role preparation*
 - *Role initiation*
 - *Role acquisition*

Findings



Role Preparation

- The participants' active engagement in securing the resources they needed to have a successful transition to practice.
 - **FNP certification** (first hurdle to overcome)
 - While it was not necessarily an agenda item, it did become a topic of conversation where the faculty and new graduates could offer support to others as this milestone was reached.
 - **Seeking clinical resources**
 - Participants discussed their success in seeking out resources such as applications on their smart phones and other resources they found to be indispensable in diagnosing and managing health conditions. They remarked that confidence and skill developed as time passed practicing as an NP.
 - **Academic-based NP fellowship**
 - Participants noted it was instrumental in helping to ease their transition to practice. The participants discussed how this helped them to establish a support system from their academic lives which then extended into their professional roles.

Findings



Role Initiation

- Encompassed the myriad of feelings that new NP graduates experience in their first year of practice.
 - **Negative feelings:**
 - being overwhelmed, needing reassurance, fear of being wrong, stressed and anxious, intimidated, feeling like an imposter or cheater, sense of isolation, role conflict, second guessing own judgment, unsure of negotiating new role, falling short, lacking support, and desperation.
 - **Reframing negative feelings:**
 - Seen as challenges and not threats
 - Back to “nursing roots”
 - Actively sought guidance and feedback
 - Resilience and reassurance
 - Support from faculty and peers through academic-based NP fellowship
 - Prepared for negative feelings
 - Support system even if isolated in NP position

Findings



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Role Acquisition

- Communicated a sense of achievement – a successful transition to NP.
 - ***Role Preparation + Role Initiation → Role Acquisition***
 - Honed skills and built relationships with colleagues and patients
 - Validation and confirmation provided comfort and confidence in patient care
 - Autonomous and professional growth in NP role
 - Persistence has led to rewarding and fulfilling career
 - Academic-based fellowship provided a firm foundation to transition from RN to NP role

Implications



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- **Nursing education**

- Strengthening nursing curricula to facilitate transition
- Provide support to NP graduates to ensure success in obtaining certification and employment (accreditation)
- Keep graduates connected as alumni (“giving back”)

- **Nursing practice**

- If transition is smooth and successful, professional colleagues and patients should benefit
- Retention in the NP role

- **Nursing research**

- Qualitative and quantitative inquiries are warranted to evaluate similar offerings as well as longitudinal effects for participants and patient outcomes

Conclusions



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- The academic-based NP fellowship described in this study:
 - Is unique to any other offerings noted within the current literature
 - Was an effective tool in helping to ease their transition to practice from RN to NP
- Participants moved through phases as described by three themes: ***role preparation, role initiation, and role acquisition.***
 - The first two themes (***role preparation and role initiation***) received their foundation within the academic-based NP fellowship
 - The third theme (***role acquisition***) occurring after the fellowship ended

Recommendations



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- Topics presented in the fellowship were timely and relevant to the needs of the graduate NP and set the stage for a successful transition.
 - Topics to be incorporated as suggested by participants
- Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that future academic-based NP fellowships be offered, expanded, and studied to determine their impact on nursing practice.

References



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