

Title:

The Doctor of Nursing Practice: Reflections on the Past and Visions for the Future

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Session Title:

The Doctor of Nursing Practice: Reflections on the Past and the Vision for the Future

Slot:

D 02: Friday, 28 July 2017: 10:45 AM-12:00 PM

Scheduled Time:

10:45 AM

Keywords:

Clinical Outcomes, Doctor of Nursing Practice and Evidence-Based Practice

References:

American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2006). *The essentials of doctoral education for advanced nursing practice*. Retrieved from <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/publication/position/DNPEssentials.pdf>

Melnyk, B. (2013). Distinguishing the preparation and roles of the PhD and DNP graduate: National implications for academic curricula and healthcare systems. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 52(8), 442-448.

Melynk, B. (2016). The doctor of nursing practice degree=evidence based practice expert. *Worldviews of Evidence-Based Nursing*, 13(3), 183-184.

Abstract Summary:

The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) is a practice-focused doctorate to prepare nurse leaders to be experts in knowledge translation and evidence-based practice. Nursing faculty members must be clear about differentiating evidence-based practice and research as they plan and execute DNP curriculum.

Learning Activity:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE
1. The learner will be able to summarize the history of the doctor of nursing practice degree.	1. A summary of the current status of DNP education in the United States . 2. A review of some of the challenges in DNP educational programs.
1. The learner will distinguish the roles and preparation of the PhD prepared nurse from the DNP prepared nurse.	1. A review of the differences in the expertise of DNP prepared nurses and PhD prepared nurses with respect to the generation and translation of new knowledge.

Abstract Text:

The rapid expansion of DNP programs in the United States has resulted in great variability in curriculum and the final DNP project. However, the principles upon which the DNP was endorsed by the American Colleges of Nursing remain unchanged and include: (1) advanced competencies for increasingly complex clinical, faculty and leadership roles; (2) enhanced knowledge to improve nursing practice and patient outcomes; (3) advanced leadership skills; (4) parity with other health professionals; (5) increased faculty for clinical instruction; (6) improved image (AACN, 2004, p.7). As outlined by the DNP Essentials document, the objective of the DNP is not to conduct rigorous research (AACN, 2006). The DNP prepared nurse is a healthcare leader with expertise in translating research into practice to improve health care quality and patient outcomes (Melynk, 2013; Melynk, 2016).

Many DNP programs continue to require their DNP students to conduct research as their final scholarly project. This has resulted in increasing confusion among both academic institutions and health care systems. This issue is in part perpetuated by the fact that many nursing faculty are new to evidence-based practice (EBP), having never had formal education and skill development in EBP. Faculty cannot teach what they themselves do not know (Melynk, 2013). Improving DNP curricula will require that nursing colleges invest in EBP education for their faculty including EBP skill building workshops so the faculty is best positioned to mentor and advise DNP students (Melynk, 2013).

Administrators in the service setting must also have a clear understanding of the preparation of the DNP nurse so that they can align role responsibilities to the practice/service setting. This includes providing career advancement opportunities such as clinical ladders.

PhD prepared nurses and DNP prepared nurses have great opportunities to transform healthcare through collaborative efforts steeped in their combined expertise: the PhD as the generator of external evidence from rigorous research; and the DNP as the best generator of internal evidence from quality improvement, outcomes management, and evidence-based projects (Melynk, 2013; Melynk, 2016). This model of PhD-DNP collaboration offers tremendous opportunities for nursing science as we move forward in closing the gap of moving research from the academic sphere into the practice setting.