

The Development of a Community Advanced Nurse Practitioner Post in the Republic of Ireland.

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Frail older adults are frequently placed at the intersection of divergent systems of healthcare.

They often have acute and complex chronic health problems affecting multiple body systems. The specialisation of medical care tends to fragment the health service delivery to this population, consequently there can be difficulty addressing the interdependence of physical, functional and psychological health. Health care services in attempting to meet the episodic needs and chronic care management of older frail adults are often in competing care paradigms with separate funding structures that also affect care delivery (Clarfield et al. 2001).

In addition to the divergent health structures it has been observed that there remains a scarcity and fragmentation of health and social support services in the community. This is a particular problem for family caregivers of frail older family members within the Republic of Ireland (Ruddle 1997, Garavan et al. 2001). Many of these community support services have traditionally operated independently of each other with little or no integration, in particular those that have been established within the larger urban areas of Ireland. This has consequently led to caregivers having to apply to multiple agencies for support and assistance with their caring role.

The aim of developing an advanced nurse practitioner post in the community for older adults has been to provide meaningful integration of care and community supports with improved equity and access to care pathways for older people living in the Dublin South City District community care area.

The ability to successfully create the ANP role was by virtue of the fact that nursing structures within the Republic of Ireland has since The Report of the Commission on Nursing (Government of Ireland 1998) developed robust and effective frameworks that have enabled and facilitated clinical career pathways for nurses. There has been a progression from registered nurse/midwife to clinical nurse specialist to advanced nurse and midwife practitioner. The development of clinical nursing career pathways has taken place against the backdrop of continuous health service reform covering areas such as policy, service model implementation and the growth of pre- and post-graduate education and training programs.

The National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery developed the advanced nurse practitioner framework in 2001. It identified the core concepts of autonomy in clinical practice, expert practice, professional and clinical leadership and research as being the key components for the establishment of ANP roles. Education to Master's level in a relevant area to clinical practice was also a requirement. In the last five years registration of ANP's has become the responsibility of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) and accreditation of ANP's and their service posts still follow the framework developed by the National Council.

The aim of the presentation at the conference in November is to relate the personal and contextual journey to the establishment of a community advanced nurse practitioner post within community nursing services. Along this journey some of the key challenges will be highlighted:

- Generalist versus specialist nursing practice in the development of an ANP role in the community
- Advanced practice versus extended scope of practice within community nursing.
- Establishing and maintaining appropriate clinical support and ongoing supervision.
- The establishment of clinical leadership within the community multidisciplinary team.
- Preventing isolation of the community ANP role and succession planning.