



The Hong Kong Academy of Nursing
香港護理專科學院

Press Release

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Viewpoints on adequate Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs) with specialty knowledge in healthcare manpower planning in response to the Manpower meeting held at Food and Health Bureau on August 6, 2020.

With advances in medical knowledge and technology, treatment and care complexity have been evolved continuously. Calculating manpower simply by counting heads and hands might not be the best way to reflect the reality. Instead, a comprehensive review taking all care quality related aspects into consideration should be the way forward.

In the last nursing manpower projection, nurses were pooled together in calculation without differentiating whether they are Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs) or novice nurses. However, the level of experience and clinical knowledge are critical for the provision of quality care. As such, the current manpower planning study is recommended to consider not only the number of nurses but also the attributes in terms of nurses' qualifications, role functions, experiences and specialization, though the challenge of including all these factors cannot be underestimated. In line with the global trend to enhance effective care with quality, Hong Kong needs more specialized APNs to take up new and extended roles in nursing to support the current dynamic healthcare needs.

For expanding primary care to increase affordability and accessibility service, such as setting up District Health Centers and nurse-led clinics, more service providers with nursing expertise in various specialties are needed. Also, ageing-in-place is a key government policy and more APNs specializing in aged, rehabilitative and palliative care are needed to support this policy. The demand for APNs in public health services especially during infectious disease outbreak and influenza surges should be carefully projected. The shortfall of APNs from retirement wave and hospital re-development should also be precisely considered. In addition, the demand for APNs in private sector cannot be neglected with more patients choosing to stay in the private hospital under appropriate insurance coverage, and the increased needs of back up support by private sector such as the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) programs particularly during infectious disease epidemic and service development.

The Hospital Authority is advised to revise the nurse vs patient ratio to 1:6 for patient safety, and maintain the established senior vs junior nurse ratio at 1:4 to address the complexity of care in this manpower review. With only 120 Nurse Consultants (NCs) leading over 27,000 nurses to address the demand of multiple specialty services in HA is suboptimal. An important role of APNs and NCs is to nurture the younger generation, helping them to acquire competencies and experiences in delivering safe specialty care. Therefore, the numbers of APNs and NCs in proportion to the overall nursing strength, patient number and care complexities need to be reviewed and adjusted accordingly. Taking multiple measures to retain

experienced APNs and attract retired APNs to return to the workforce or postpone retirement is also a critical need.

As alluded above, the increasing healthcare demands and expectations from the public and among nurses urge the need to speed up nursing specialization. More nurses can be prepared to take up APN roles, thus contributing to healthcare development in a more impactful way.

The NC post has been developed more than a decade. Exploring to further develop this post is recommended in the current manpower planning, so that a more accurate picture of nursing workforce can be projected. Overseas experience of Nurse Practitioners (NPs) has been proven effective in providing high-quality care and reducing healthcare costs. By developing related education program, accreditation mechanism and practice frameworks, NCs can be empowered to take up NP roles. At present, there is only one NC per specialty who serves all hospitals in the same cluster. As NC working solo is hard to achieve the best outcomes, each NC is suggested to work with at least one subordinate to facilitate NC development and succession.

There is a clear path for promoting APN to Ward Manager (WM) and then to Department Operations Manager (DOM), but not to NC. It is recommended that Nurse Specialist (NS) can serve as a bridge between NC and APN, in parallel with WM in-between DOM and APN. A clear hierarchy should be in place to support this clinical career progression and strategies should be identified to support NC development.

To better support advanced nursing practice (ANP) development, a comprehensive professional and career development plan for APNs is needed, together with a mechanism to legitimize ANP and to certify nurses practicing at an advanced level in their respective specialties. The Hong Kong Academy of Nursing (HKAN) has a well-developed mechanism to accredit academy colleges and certify fellows/members who reach the stipulated ANP standards. HKAN and her 14 Academy Colleges have been invited by the Nursing Council of Hong Kong in 2020 to develop a core competency framework for Advanced and Specialized Nursing Practice (A&SP) and pave the way for voluntary registration of A&SP in the near future. HKAN has no hesitation to engage, contribute and offer support to advancing our specialty nurses to reach the highest clinical expert level.



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