

Nurse Practitioner Role Development: A Framework to Assess Role Integration



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THE ISSUE

There is limited information about what will help long-term integration and sustainability of the nurse practitioner (NP) role. A new role might be implemented in a particular setting, but whether it is actually integrated into the day-to-day functioning of the program and sustained in an organization over the long-term is not clear.

THE PURPOSE

To look at the NP experience of role development within a healthcare team environment, the effects of NP collaboration on role integration, and to develop a NP role integration framework.

What did we do?

A participatory action research (PAR) study was conducted to look how collaboration influenced role integration for NPs. Seventeen NPs from two different health authorities in British Columbia participated in 5 to 6 face-to-face research meetings over a 6 month period. The meetings were audio-taped and transcribed for data analysis. As co-researchers, the NPs were invited to participate in data analysis, reporting and dissemination. Two NPs assessed their own role integration status and determined the strengths and weaknesses of their practice.

What did we find?

Five characteristics of NP integration were identified that formed the basis for the NP role integration framework: role autonomy, role recognition, role inclusion, role contribution, and role alliance. Barriers to NP integration included:

- inconsistent support from site managers and policy leaders
- lack of public awareness and understanding of the role
- lack of team support and mentoring
- limited research and evaluation efforts to measure the value-added role of the NP
- lack of regional policies, infrastructure and funding

How will this research help?

NP role integration relies on a sustained funding mechanism, as well as for the development of infrastructure and measurements to track information on role effectiveness. The use of an NP role integration framework can help to track data and assess successful role integration for NPs in primary health care.

What's next?

There is a need to further develop the NP role integration framework as an evaluation instrument for use by policy leaders, decision makers, and researchers to determine NP role integration status in a given health region.

BOTTOM LINE?

The NP role integration framework helps to outline the characteristics of role integration and provides a tool for NPs to self assess the extent to which role integration has been achieved.

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