

The Power and Politics of Collaboration in Nurse Practitioner Role Development



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THE ISSUE

Nurse Practitioner (NP) role development in British Columbia is part of a national strategy to formalize the role and ensure its sustainability. While there has been significant attention given at the provincial level for the introduction of legislation, regulation, and education plans, there was limited time, direction, and guidance provided to the regional Health Authorities for NP role implementation to support role integration.

THE PURPOSE

To look at how inter-professional collaboration can help with NP role development and integration in primary health care.

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 engaged in 5-6 face-to-face research meetings over a 6 month period. NP group sessions were audio-taped and transcribed for data analysis. The action meetings included an audio-taped session to discuss organizational planning of the NP role with health authority leaders and a research action day to design a research template for NPs own use.

What did we find?

Despite government endorsement for NP role integration, NPs identified that system support and available resources are not sufficient to help them with the varied, complex and multiple expectations of their roles. To increase successful role integration, NPs relied on developing collaborative relationships with other healthcare professionals and the public to help clarify their roles and responsibilities and gather support.

How will this research help?

This study provides important insights into the power and politics of NP role development and offers direction for future role integration. NPs need significant resources and backing from system and organization leaders to help them manage and be successful in their complex roles.

What's next?

Collaborative efforts among healthcare leaders are needed to effectively prepare and support NPs in managing the power relations found in health organizations. Healthcare system support and resources need to be sufficient to help advance NP role development and ensure its sustainability.

BOTTOM LINE?

As an important part of primary healthcare renewal, NPs must extend the political nature of their role, advocating for more direction, guidance and support for NP role development, integration and sustainability.

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