

Nurse Practitioner Role Implementation in Ontario Public Health Units



CHSRF/CIHR Chair Program in
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By: Angela De Guzman¹, NP-PHC, Donna Ciliska², RN, PhD, Alba DiCenso², RN, PhD

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THE ISSUE

Nurse Practitioners (NPs) were recently introduced in Public Health Units (PHUs) in Ontario to assist with health promotion and primary prevention programs. A number of factors have aided role implementation however, at the same time there are a number of barriers to role implementation.

THE PURPOSE

To look at NPs' perceptions of what has helped and hindered NP role implementation in Ontario PHUs, including factors that influence NP job satisfaction.

What did we do?

A descriptive study was conducted using a postal survey of all NPs working in Ontario PHUs. Despite being a small sample size, 28 out of 29 NPs (96.5%) completed the survey.

What did we find?

Key factors that have helped NP role implementation and job satisfaction include:

- Employer support
- Management support
- NP involvement in the development of their role
- NP knowledge of Public Health Programs
- Access to Public Health Programs for clients
- Respect and trust by physicians

Key factors that hindered NP role implementation and job satisfaction include:

- Being the only NP working in the PHU
- Inadequate salaries
- Inadequate vacation and sick coverage
- Poor employer awareness of the role
- Unwillingness of specialists to accept NP referrals
- Lack of physician and other health care provider understanding of the role

How will this research help?

Information obtained in this study can help with NP role implementation and improve job satisfaction for NPs working in public health units in Ontario and across Canada.

What's next?

More PHU based studies can help to explore NP, physician and health care team collaboration and the potential role of unions in supporting NP implementation. In addition, it may be useful for exit interviews to be conducted with NPs who leave Public Health in order to see if there are other factors that influence role implementation and job satisfaction.

BOTTOM LINE?

The introduction of NP roles in Public Health Units in Ontario is an innovative way to improve service delivery for clients in the community. In order to facilitate NP role implementation and improve job satisfaction in Public Health, factors that help and hinder full integration must be addressed.

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¹Toronto Public Health, ²McMaster University

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Renee Charbonneau-Smith, Knowledge Exchange Specialist, CHSRF/CIHR Chair Program in APN
McMaster University, 1200 Main St. W., HSC 3N25, Hamilton, Ontario L8N 3Z5
Phone: 905-525-9140, ext. 21286, Fax: 905-524-5199, email: charbon@mcmaster.ca