NURSING PRACTICE, REGULATION AND EDUCATION

In the context of APN in the Caribbean

By Marcel Johnson, Director of Nursing (CNO), Bahamas
Prepared for the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)/ World Health Organization (WHO) Summit:

Leveraging Universal Health Coverage and Advanced Practice Nursing (APN)

Hamilton, Canada
15-17 April, 2015
OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

- Definition of Advanced Practice Nurse (APN)
- Definition of APN in Bahamian Context
- Practice of APN’s in the Caribbean
- Regulation of APN’s in some Caribbean Countries
- Barriers to Legislation
- Education of APN’s
- Progress in The Bahamas
- Future of APN’s in the Caribbean
- Summary
DEFINITION OF ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSE

- A licenced registered who has completed graduate training as a clinical nurse specialist, nurse anaesthetist, nurse-midwife, or nurse practitioner.

- (The American Heritage Medical Dictionary)
A registered nurse who has completed a programme of study from an accredited institution approved for post basic training by the Council, has passed the prescribed advanced practice nurse examination, has attained advanced academic knowledge and clinical skills for expanded practice and is registered with the Council.
Nurse practitioners are presently the cadre of advanced practice nurse who are able to practice to some extent.

Jamaican nurse practitioners, although not regulated are allowed to assess, diagnose and treat patients in the primary care setting.

They prescribe by using prescriptions that were pre-signed by physicians.
Presently, there is no legislation in the Caribbean to advance the practice of the APN.

The Programme has been conducted in Jamaica for thirty-nine years but the practice remains unregulated.

The Bahamas is in the process of repealing “The Nurses and Midwives Act, 1971 to include the APN.

Montserrat, under The “Nurses and Midwives Act, 2002”, appears as if some attempt was made to regulate the practice.
“family nurse practitioner” means a nurse practitioner who is prepared under the direction of a medical practitioner to be responsible for and take decisions concerning preventive, curative and restorative health care for people in the community generally, at all ages.
Physicians remain the greatest barrier. They do not support the practice of APNs.

Pharmacists are another barrier. They are reluctant to acknowledge that nurses with additional training can prescribe medications for patients.
Presently, The University of The West Indies in Jamaica is the only country in The Caribbean which offers Advanced Practice Nursing Programmes.

Prior to the Family Nurse Practitioner Programme being taught at The University of The West Indies, it was a Certificate Programme with a duration of eighteen months.

The Nurse Practitioners Programmes are now of two years duration and is at the Masters level.
Nurse practitioners in most Caribbean countries were trained in Jamaica. Some were trained at the Certificate level and some trained at the Graduate level.

Some nurse practitioners in The Bahamas were trained at the graduate level in The United States of America.

EDUCATION OF APN’S IN THE CARIBBEAN
The Government of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas is preparing to implement a National Health Insurance Plan in January 2016, as a strategy for providing Universal Health Coverage.

There is no provision in The Nurses and Midwives Act for regulation of the advanced practice nurse.
- It has been pointed out by consultants that nurse practitioners need to be regulated in order to successfully implement NHI.

- We are now preparing to repeal the Nurses and Midwives Act, 1971 which will include legislation of the practice of the APN.

- We have been offered assistance from external consultants to prepare the Draft for the attorneys.

PROGRESS IN THE BAHAMAS (CONT’D)
It is anticipated that nurse practitioners can play a pivotal role in the delivery of health care to some of the Family Island communities.

This will ultimately achieve the goal of providing Universal coverage for all of the Bahamian people.
The future for APNs in The Caribbean looks bright.

All countries have been encouraged to achieve Universal Health Coverage for their people.

Countries which are sparsely populated in some areas must now look at strategies, other than the traditional ones to provide Universal Health Coverage for their people.

This provides a golden opportunity for APNs.
Although training for the APN has been on-going for thirty-nine years in The Caribbean, legislation to regulate the practice for this group of nurses has lagged behind.

Countries have been mandated to provide Universal Health Coverage for their people.

Advanced Practice Nurses can advance that agenda by providing health services to people in sparsely populated areas. This would reduce the cost of health care.

SUMMARY
Thank you!