

Advanced Practice Nurse Continuing Education

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SCOPING REVIEW

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Continuing education for advanced practice nurses: A scoping review

Mea Mirella Marjatta Wright¹ | Tarja Anneli Kvist¹ | Sanna Marika Imeläinen² | Krista Susanna Jokiniemi¹

¹Department of Nursing Science, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio, Finland

²Faculty of Health Care and Social Services, LAB University of Applied Sciences, Lappeenranta, Finland

Correspondence

Mea Mirella Marjatta Wright, Department of Nursing Science, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio, Finland.
Email: mea.wright@uef.fi

Abstract

Aims: The aim of the study was to identify the nature and extent of scientific research addressing continuing education for advanced practice nurses.

Design: A scoping review.

Review Methods: The Joanna Briggs Institute's methodology for scoping reviews.

Data Sources: Electronic search was conducted on 17 September 2023 via CINAHL, PsycINFO, PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Cochrane Library and the Joanna Briggs Institute's Evidence-Based Practice Database for research articles published between 2012 and 2023.

Results: Nineteen papers were included in this review. Scientific research on continuing education for advanced practice nursing roles (i.e. nurse practitioner, clinical nurse specialist) has primarily been conducted in the United States and mostly addresses online-delivered continuing education interventions for clinical care competency. Most of the interventions targeted nurse practitioners.

Conclusion: Continuing education has a pivotal role in supporting advanced practice nursing competency development. In addition to clinical care, future continuing education research should focus on other advanced practice nursing competencies, such as education, leadership, supporting organizational strategies, research and evidence implementation.

Implications for the Profession and/or Patient Care: Continuing education programmes for advanced practice nurses should be rigorously developed, implemented and evaluated to support the quality and effectiveness of patient care.

Impact: Continuing education for advanced practice nursing roles is an understudied phenomenon. This review highlights future research priorities and may inform the development of continuing education programmes.

Reporting Method: PRISMA-ScR.

KEYWORDS

advanced practice nursing, clinical nurse specialist, continuing education, nurse clinician, nurse practitioner, nurses, nursing, scoping review

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Advanced practice nurse continuing education is an essential component in the ever-evolving landscape of healthcare. As the demand for skilled nursing professionals continues to rise, advanced practice nurses (APNs) must commit to lifelong learning and professional development. Continuing education not only enhances clinical skills but also ensures that nurses remain competent in delivering high-quality patient care. This article will explore the various aspects of continuing education for advanced practice nurses, including its importance, available options, and best practices for effective learning.

The Importance of Continuing Education for Advanced Practice Nurses

Continuing education is crucial for advanced practice nurses for several reasons:

1. Keeping Up with Medical Advances

The medical field is characterized by rapid advancements in technology, treatments, and best practices. APNs must stay informed about the latest research findings, techniques, and pharmacological developments to provide the best care possible.

2. Maintaining Licensure and Certification

Many states and certifying bodies require APNs to complete a specific number of continuing education hours to maintain licensure and certification. This requirement ensures that nurses are up-to-date with current standards of practice.

3. Enhancing Skills and Knowledge

Continuing education allows APNs to refine their clinical skills and expand their knowledge base. This is particularly important as healthcare becomes more complex, with an increasing focus on specialized care.

4. Improving Patient Outcomes

Research has shown that healthcare providers who engage in continuing education are better equipped to deliver quality care. By enhancing their skills and knowledge, APNs can improve patient outcomes and satisfaction.

5. Career Advancement Opportunities

Advanced practice nurses who pursue continuing education may have better opportunities for career advancement. Additional certifications and specialized training can lead to leadership roles, teaching positions, or specialized clinical roles.

Types of Continuing Education for Advanced Practice Nurses

There are various avenues available for advanced practice nurses to pursue continuing education. These options can be categorized into several types:

1. Formal Education Programs

- Degree Programs: Pursuing further education such as a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) or a PhD in Nursing can significantly enhance an APN's knowledge and qualifications.
- Certificate Programs: Specialized certification programs can provide focused education in areas such as gerontology, pediatrics, or mental health.

2. Workshops and Seminars

- Local Workshops: Many healthcare organizations offer workshops that focus on specific skills, such as advanced assessment techniques or new treatment methodologies.
- National Conferences: Attending national nursing conferences allows APNs to learn from experts in the field, network with peers, and participate in hands-on workshops.

3. Online Courses and Webinars

- E-Learning Platforms: Online education provides flexibility, allowing APNs to learn at their own pace. Platforms like Coursera, Udemy, and specialized nursing websites offer a variety of courses.

- Webinars: Many professional nursing organizations host webinars on current topics, allowing nurses to earn continuing education credits from the comfort of their own home.

4. Peer-Reviewed Journals and Articles

- Reading Scientific Literature: Staying updated with the latest research through peer-reviewed journals can provide critical insights and new practices that can be applied in clinical settings.
- Contributing to Research: Engaging in research and publishing findings can also serve as a form of continuing education.

Best Practices for Continuing Education

To maximize the benefits of continuing education, advanced practice nurses should consider the following best practices:

1. Set Clear Learning Goals

Before beginning any continuing education program, APNs should identify specific learning objectives. These goals should align with their current practice, areas for improvement, and future career aspirations.

2. Choose Relevant Courses and Programs

Select continuing education programs that are directly applicable to practice areas or that will enhance skills needed in your current role. Consider seeking courses that offer practical applications and case studies.

3. Stay Organized

Keep track of completed courses, CEUs earned, and any future courses you plan to take. Maintaining an organized record will help ensure compliance with licensure and certification requirements.

4. Engage with Peers

Participating in study groups, discussions, or professional organizations can provide valuable insights and foster a collaborative learning environment. Engaging with peers can also enhance motivation and accountability.

5. Reflect on Learning Experiences

After completing a course or workshop, take time to reflect on what was learned and how it can be applied in practice. This reflection can solidify new knowledge and encourage continued growth.

Resources for Advanced Practice Nurse Continuing Education

There are numerous resources available for advanced practice nurses seeking continuing education opportunities. Some of the most valuable include:

- **American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP):** Offers a variety of continuing education resources, including webinars, conferences, and online courses.
- **National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF):** Provides educational resources and supports the advancement of nurse practitioners through various programs.
- **American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC):** Offers certification programs and continuing education resources for nurses across multiple specialties.

- **State Boards of Nursing:** Visit your state's board of nursing website for specific continuing education requirements and approved providers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, **advanced practice nurse continuing education** is vital for maintaining competence, improving patient care, and fostering professional growth. By engaging in a variety of educational opportunities, APNs can ensure they remain at the forefront of the healthcare field. As the demands of the profession evolve, so too must the commitment to lifelong learning. Investing in continuing education not only benefits individual practitioners but ultimately enhances the quality of care provided to patients, making it an indispensable aspect of advanced nursing practice.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the importance of continuing education for advanced practice nurses?

Continuing education is crucial for advanced practice nurses as it ensures they stay current with the latest medical knowledge, technologies, and best practices, ultimately enhancing patient care and safety.

What types of continuing education opportunities are available for advanced practice nurses?

Advanced practice nurses can engage in various continuing education opportunities such as online courses, webinars, conferences, workshops, and certification programs that focus on specific areas of practice.

How do state regulations impact continuing education requirements for advanced practice nurses?

State regulations dictate the specific continuing education requirements, including the number of hours and types of courses needed for license renewal, which can vary significantly from one state to another.

Can advanced practice nurses earn certification through continuing education?

Yes, many advanced practice nurses can earn specialty certifications through continuing education programs, which can enhance their qualifications and career advancement opportunities.

What role does technology play in advanced practice nurse continuing education?

Technology plays a significant role by providing access to online learning platforms, simulation training, and virtual conferences, allowing advanced practice nurses to conveniently pursue education while balancing their professional responsibilities.

How often should advanced practice nurses complete continuing education courses?

Most states require advanced practice nurses to complete continuing education courses every 2 to 3 years, but the specific frequency and number of hours can vary based on state regulations and individual employer policies.

What are some emerging trends in continuing education for advanced practice nurses?

Emerging trends include a greater emphasis on interprofessional education, the integration of evidence-based practice, and the use of mobile learning apps to enhance accessibility and

engagement in continuing education.

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