

# DEVELOPMENT OF CONCEPT AMONG CLINICAL NURSE PRACTITIONER (CNS) IN MALAYSIA

Inthira Purusothaman<sup>1\*</sup> & Lim Pek Hong<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nursing Tutor, Department of Nursing, International Medical University (IMU), Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur

<sup>2</sup>Head of Nursing Department, International Medical University (IMU), Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur

\*Corresponding Author Email: [inthira-purusothaman@imu.edu.my](mailto:inthira-purusothaman@imu.edu.my)

## ABSTRACT

Advanced nursing practice involves higher level of knowledge and skills of nurses to perform autonomous practice in clinical settings in order to meet the needs of individuals, families and communities. Advanced practice in nursing is also known as adjusting boundaries for future practice, pioneering and developing new roles of nurses in clinical practice, research and education. Advanced practice of nursing in the developed countries are recognized with different nomenclatures such as advanced nurse practitioner, clinical nurse specialist, specialized nurse practitioner, nurse practitioner, certified nurse practitioner and advanced practice registered nurse. Malaysia is one of the pioneering Asian countries to introduce clinical nurse specialist in hospital settings, which is a stepping stone for the development of advanced nursing practice.

**Keywords:** Nurses in Malaysia, Clinical Nurse Practitioner, Advanced Nurse Practice

## REVIEW OF ARTICLES

### Development of concept among Clinical Nurse Practitioner (CNS) in Malaysia

The term 'Advanced practice nurse' is used to define nurse's roles which involves higher level of knowledge and skills attained by nurses to practice autonomously in clinical settings to meet the needs of individuals, families, communities and population (Gardner *et al.*, 2007; McNamara *et al.*, 2009). The United Kingdom Central Council (UKCC, 1994) defined advanced practice in nursing as adjusting boundaries for future practice, pioneering and developing new roles with changing needs and advancing clinical practice, research and education. However, Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC, 2005) defined advanced practice nurses as those with vast experience as a result of advanced clinical education, knowledge and skills in one particular area of practice where they are capable to diagnose, treat and refer to other medical personnel (Pearson, 2011). Globally there is lack of clarity in the definition, scope and parameters of advanced practice nursing roles. There are some consensus that incorporates clinical practice, research, education, leadership and professional development in advanced practice of nursing (Gardner *et al.*, 2007; Pearson 2011; Ruel and Motyka 2009).

Nevertheless, Manzoukas and Watkinson (2006) eventually have given better clarification to the roles and characteristics of advance nurse practitioners with the development of seven generic features. Ability to discover, innovate and expand nursing profession using extensive knowledge and skills along with research evidence and academic thinking processes. All these enables advanced nurse practitioners to work confidently with multidisciplinary team and offer leadership and expert coaching (Manzoukas and Watkinson 2006).

Competency is another unique term which is linked to advanced nursing practice. Advanced nursing practitioners are able to apply advanced knowledge and skills unlike junior medical practitioners. These nurses even take up the roles of expanded medical therapeutics in many cases (Hamric, 2009). Hamric, (2009) also stated that expanded theoretical knowledge is one of the core elements for advanced practitioners. However, strong experiential component or in-depth clinical experiences are equally critical in the development of competencies and clinical practice expertise among advanced practitioners.

The term 'Advanced nurse practitioner' is well known and widely practiced in the developed countries like United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Canada.

Advanced practice nurses in these developed countries have been recognized with different nomenclatures such as advanced nurse practitioner, clinical nurse specialist, specialized nurse practitioner, nurse practitioner, certified nurse practitioner and advanced practice registered nurse who practices advanced and expand knowledge as well skills in various clinical settings. The scope of practice of an advanced practice nurse with a master's degree as an entry requirement, encompasses advanced health assessment, diagnosis, disease management, health education and promotion, referral ability, prescribing diagnostic procedure, medications and treatment plans, admitting and discharging privileges, patient caseload management, collaborative practice, evaluation of healthcare services and research (McLoughlin *et al.*, 2012; Pulcini *et al.*, 2010).

### **ADVANCED NURSES IN MALAYSIA: CURRENT STATUS**

Though Malaysia does not have nurses with the title 'advanced nurse practitioners', there are clinical nurse specialists (CNS) in Malaysian healthcare organizations, especially at government healthcare centers with a position level of U41, which is the level for graduate candidate. The Malaysian healthcare industry requires more specialized nurses. Currently there are more than 80,000 State Registered Nurses (SRN) working in public and private sectors, but less than 500 of these are clinical nurse specialist (The Sun Daily, 2012). The news article has also highlighted that observed key roles among Malaysian CNSs are to work closely with doctors and other healthcare members. Apart from that CNS also educate and support patients, relatives and caregivers, as well as carry out home visit following discharge from hospital. Additionally, the author has seen that a CNS has the capability to provide details of the patient's diagnosis, brief medical history, clinical examination findings, treatment plan, variability of the condition, disabling effects and patient's prognosis in their own area of expertise besides being expert consultants to other nurses.

However, some Malaysian primary healthcare nurses are given privilege to carry out certain advanced tasks such as providing treatment for common illness, follow-up patients with chronic diseases, cleaning wound and removing stitches. Besides that, these nurses provide health consultation and promotions for patients, notify

infectious diseases, perform simple laboratory tests, and stabilize emergency cases before referring to hospitals. These primary healthcare nurses are not known as either clinical nurse specialists nor advanced nurse practitioners. Most of these nurses are diploma and degree holders with specialization by attending six months post basic course. Asian countries such as Malaysia have started to introduce clinical nurse specialist in hospital settings as a stepping stone to the world of advanced nursing practice (Pulcini *et al.*, 2010).

This situation is found to be similar with Irish nurses holding clinical nurse specialist post via immediate career pathway. The Irish nurses working in a specialized area of practice at least for 5 years with post-registration education, relevant to the area of practice are promoted as clinical nurse specialists (Doody and Bailey, 2011). However, nurses in New Zealand having similar educational qualification as Irish nurses are identified as clinical experts, leaders, coordinators as well as educators. Some of these nurses had only received "on-the-job-training" to hold the above mentioned positions (Cumming, 2012; Roberts *et al.*, 2011). The New Zealand Nurses Organization has defined clinical nurse specialists as experts, direct and specialized care givers, researchers, policy makers, procedure creators and supporters for other colleagues (Roberts *et al.*, 2011).

Additionally, The American Nurses Association has defined clinical nurse specialist as an expert clinician and client advocate in his or her specialized area of nursing practice to improve nursing care and patient outcomes (Roberts *et al.*, 2011). According to Onishi and Kanda (2010) clinical nurse specialist focus more on a single specialty. However advanced nurse practitioners have greater autonomy in clinical practice as they have higher level of knowledge in medical conditions. Therefore, advanced nurse practitioners especially at primary and ambulatory care settings are occupied with broader range of roles such as physical examination, caseload management, prescription of medication, diagnostic test and treatment plan (Bryant-Lukosius *et al.*, 2004; Onishi and Kanda 2010).

Even though clinical nurse specialist title in Malaysia falls under the umbrella of advanced practice nursing, it does not meet the educational requirement to be considered as advanced nurse practitioner. In order to meet the international standard and agreement of advance

nursing practice, clinical nurse specialists are advised to obtain master's degree as an educational entry requirement besides having broad knowledge, complex decision making skills as well as expanded clinical competencies (ICN, 2005). Advanced knowledge and clinical expertise which is gained through master program enable nurses to develop and use the advanced healthcare technology in patient management (Jansen and Zwygart-Stauffacher, 2010). In addition, post graduate education could prepare nurses to demonstrate high level of competency and confidence in their roles, practice autonomously beyond traditional nursing boundaries, and enhance collegial relationship with physicians and other healthcare professionals.

In order to meet professional and international standard most of the countries are moving towards preparing and upgrading nurses to advanced nurse practitioners by encouraging them to attain master's degree qualification in clinical specialization with adequate advanced clinical experience. Postgraduate studies enable nurses to practice at advanced level. Therefore, nursing education in Malaysia is moving towards tertiary level education which emphasizes strong theoretical knowledge base. Additionally tertiary education could be the stepping-stone for nurses to acquire specialized knowledge at advanced level and prepare them to be skillful advanced nurse practitioners. Advanced nurse practitioners have obtained higher level of education such as specialized graduate degree or master's degree in particular field of nursing (Gardner *et al.*, 2006; Ruel and Motyka, 2009; Pulcini *et al.*, 2010; Pearson, 2011). However, masters or doctoral level is believed to be an adequate requirement for advanced nurse practitioners to assess, manage and evaluate patients independently (Hamric, 2009). Furthermore graduate education is an efficient and standardized

manner to inculcate complex competencies in advanced nurse practitioners.

Nursing in Malaysia is still at the initial stage of the development for clinical nurse specialists and advanced nurse practitioners. Therefore, a clear definition of advanced nursing practice terminology, consistent title, educational preparation and description of roles of advanced nurse practitioners should be established. By following this method many confusion can be avoided regarding the roles of advanced practitioners' and to acquire recognition as well as acceptance from the society and other healthcare members. Ambiguous definition of the goals and roles of advanced nurse practitioners have resulted in broad discrepancies regarding role interpretation and appraisal of advanced practice nursing (Bryant-Lukosius *et al.*, 2004). Apart from that, it also directly contributes to role conflict, role overload, and various stakeholders acceptance. Autonomy in clinical practice, pioneering professional and clinical leadership, expert practitioner and researcher are the principal roles of advanced nursing practitioners (Furlong and Smith 2005). Thus, it is important to ensure clear definition of the responsibilities and objectives of advanced nursing practice. Additionally, it is essential to have policy with standard qualification requirement, clear career pathway and scope of practice to guide the development of advanced nursing practice.

Successful governance of the clinical nurse practitioners will facilitate the employers to assure that nurses are organized regarding their advanced roles in such a manner that their suitability to practice can be established as focused, premeditated and supported by proper education that is both measurable and safe. In the longer run, governance allows employers to plan for service redesign, and expand new advanced nursing roles in a more significant and targeted manner than before.

## REFERENCES

- Bryant-Lukosius, D, Dicenso, A, Browne, G and Pinelli, J, (2004). Advanced practice nursing roles: development, implementation and evaluation. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 48(5), pp 519-529.
- Cumming, G (2012). Survey looks at issues facing clinical nurse specialists. *Kai Tiaki Nursing New Zealand*. 18(5), pp 26-28.
- Doody, O & Bailey, M (2011). The development of clinical nurse specialist roles in Ireland. *British Journal of Nursing*. 20(14), pp 868-872.

- Furlong, E & Smith, R (2005). Advanced nursing practice: policy, education and role development. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*. 14(9), pp 1059-1066.
- Gardner, G, Dunn, S, Carryer, J & Gardner, A (2006). Competency and capability: imperative for nurse practitioner education. *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 24(1), pp 8-14.
- Hamric, AB (2009). Definition of advanced practice nursing. In: A.B. HAMRIC, A.J. SPROSS and C.M. HANSON, eds, *Advanced nursing practice: an integrative approach*. 4<sup>th</sup> edn. St. Louis, Missouri: Saunders. pp 75-93.
- International Council of Nurses: International Nurse Practitioner-Advanced Practice Nursing Network (2005). Scope of practice, standards and competencies of the advanced practice nurse. Available at: <http://www.aanp.org/INP%20APN%20Network/Policy%20and%20Regulation/policyhome.asp>
- Jansen, MP & Zwygart-Stauffacher, M, eds, (2010). *Advanced practice nursing: core concepts for professional role development*. 4<sup>th</sup> edn. New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Mantzoukas, S & Watkinson, S (2007). Review of advanced nursing practice: the international literature and developing the generic features. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*. 16(1), pp 28-37.
- McLoghlin, A, Shewbridge, A & Owens, R (2012). Developing the role of advanced practitioner. *Cancer Nursing Practice*. 11(2), pp 14-19.
- McNamara, S, Giguere, V, St-Louis, L & Boileau, J (2012). Development and implementation of the specialized nurse practitioner role: use of the PEPPA framework to achieve success. *Journal of Nursing and Health Sciences*. 11(3), pp 318-325.
- Nursing and Midwifery Council (2005). Annex.: Domains of Practice and competencies. NMC Consultation on a Proposed Framework for Post-Registration Nursing. Nursing and Midwifery Council, London. Available at: <http://www.nmc-uk.org>
- Onishi, M & Kanda, K (2010). Expected roles and utilization of specialist nurses in Japan: the nurse administrators' perspective. *Journal of Nursing Management*. 18(3), pp 311-318.
- Pearson, H (2011). Concepts of advanced practice: what does it mean? *British Journal of Nursing*. 20(3), pp 184-185.
- Pulcini, J, Jelic, M, Gul, R & Loke, AY (2010). An international survey on advanced practice nursing education, practice, and regulation. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*. 42(1), pp 31-39.
- Roberts, J, Floyd, S & Thompson, S (2011). The Clinical Nurse Specialist in New Zealand: how is the role defined? *Nursing Praxis in New Zealand*. 27(2), pp 24-34.
- Ruel, J & Motyka, C (2009). Advanced practice nursing: a principle-based concept analysis. *Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners*. 21(7), pp 384-392.
- The Sun Daily (2012). Healthcare industry needs more specialist nurses, 9 May 2012. Available from <<http://www.thesundaily.my/news/374327>> [15<sup>th</sup> August 2012]
- United Kingdom Central Council (UKCC) (1994). *The future of professional practice-the Council's standards for education and practice following registration*. UKCC, London