

Critical Analysis of Nursing Roles in An Evolving Healthcare Landscape

Ayed Radhi Nazzal Alshammari¹, Khlood Hussain Hezab Alshammari², fahad hamoud mohammad alshammari³, Abdulrahman dahimish alshammari⁴, Ffaisal Radhi Nazal Alshammari⁵, Awad Hamoud Dhahawi Alshammari⁶, Hazzaa Matar Alshammari⁷, Manal Binyah Alshammari⁸, Abeer Binyah Thayid Alshammari⁹, Ohud Binyah Thayid Alshammari¹⁰

Abstract

The status of nurses working in healthcare facilities has transformed in terms of the relevance of their work to emerging healthcare systems. Taken within the context of a transforming healthcare system, this paper aims to critically discuss the shifts in nursing roles. Challenges like technology, chronic diseases, policy changes, and patient-focused care greatly influence nursing practice today. This paper aims to discuss the effects of the changes on the nursing profession and the competencies that define practice. The paper compares the current literature on this topic and identifies areas that require further training and support for nurses due to emergent demands. Furthermore, the paper provides guidelines on how to improve nurses' roles in healthcare delivery systems to guarantee their proper contribution to the delivery of care and the improvement of patient's health.

Keywords: *Nursing roles; healthcare landscape; patient-centered care; chronic diseases; technological advancements; nursing competencies; healthcare reform; nursing education.*

Introduction

The healthcare system is dynamic; healthcare requires change, and change happens because of demographics, technological enhancements, policy impacts, and disease distribution shifts towards chronic diseases. These changes hold both threats and potentialities in the professional nursing community, as the nurses are primarily charged with administering care, speaking for the patients, and ensuring support in the totality of the healthcare system. The dynamics of healthcare make the nursing roles dynamic by increasing complexity to meet the rising challenges of the new age, new technologies, and system integration that requires a crew effort.

Lately, nursing has emerged as a highly professionalized and insulated practice; now, the nurses are assigned duties that used to be the sole province of physicians and are involved in different leadership and decision-making activities. These changes have led to an enlargement of the scope and accountability of nurses that require new nursing skills and proficiencies. This paper seeks to discuss the role dynamics of nurses within the world's health systems and identify factors that have caused the new roles to emerge and the implications arising from the new roles for the nursing profession.

Scope of Study

Specifically, this work aims to assess the change of nursing roles in the current and progressing more complex healthcare setting. More precisely, it focuses on factors such as technology, policy, and demographics in nursing. The paper also explores how nurses have embraced these changes and emerging

¹ Alshenan General hospital-Hail, Saudi Arabia; Ayed14100@gmail.com.

² Alshenan General hospital-Hail, Saudi Arabia; Khhualshamri@moh.gov.sa.

³ Alshenan General hospital-Hail, Saudi Arabia; kindheart20@gmail.com.

⁴ Alshenan General hospital-Hail, Saudi Arabia; abdualshammari@moh.gov.sa.

⁵ Alshenan General hospital-Hail, Saudi Arabia; gov6400@gmail.com.

⁶ Alshenan General hospital-Hail, Saudi Arabia; Awhoalshammari@hom.gov.sa.

⁷ Alshenan General hospital-Hail, Saudi Arabia; hazaama@moh.gov.sa.

⁸ Cardiac Center aT Hail, Saudi Arabia; mabalshammri@moh.gov.sa.

⁹ Alshenan general hospital-hail, Saudi Arabia; Abbialshammari@moh.gov.sa.

¹⁰ Cardiac center at Hail, Saudi Arabia; OhudbA@moh.gov.sa.

skills necessary for practice. The roles range from direct clinical caregiving to clinical leadership roles, research, and academic positions, and it considers how these roles are connected in the context of the total healthcare system.

Justification

The importance of unraveling and analyzing the transformation in the function of nursing personnel is well established by the pervasiveness of the nursing profession and its relevance in the overall dispensation of health care services. Nurses remain the biggest population of the healthcare sector in the world and are mostly in direct contact with patients. In parallel with increased expectations from the health care context, the roles of nurses are expected to be more independent, adaptable, and knowledgeable, working and collaborating with other professionals as team members using sophisticated technology. Providing a critical discussion of how the roles of nurses are evolving in this study will help advance the knowledge of how the current nursing workforce can be prepared to tackle future healthcare organizations in 0 to 5 years.

Context, Importance, and Relevance

This study is, therefore, relevant to the nursing curriculum, policy formulation, and practice. Currently, the healthcare systems are under pressure in terms of demands resulting from elderly people, escalating costs of health care, and increased demand for efficient healthcare provision to the communities. Nurse Education for Health and Human Services must respond to these challenges. Learning how nursing roles are dynamic to these changes is important for effective curriculum development, educator preparation, and the development of health policies that enhance the function of nursing to improve the health of patients. Indeed, the importance of this study for nursing research transcends an academic interest, as it provides empirical support for the changes in the nursing profession and, by extension, healthcare that are urgently needed.

Literature Review

Existing Literature

Indeed, a large abundance of literature has focused on nurses' roles in the dynamic healthcare sector. Several authors focus on the continuous growth of healthcare delivery system implications and the expanding ranges of nursing practice. Using such advanced technologies as telemedicine, electronic health records, and artificial intelligence has changed how care is delivered, and nurses need to learn how to competently handle them while delivering care. More so, the change to a newly unitary and integrated care model and patient-centered approach emphasizes the leadership, coordination, and decision-making roles required of the nurses, which were hitherto mainly the preserve of doctors (Hassmiller & Reinhard, 2016; Mohammad et al., 2022; Al-Husban et al., 2023).

In several studies, the increasing role that advanced practice nurses play in the health care system has been emphasized. Leaders of APNs such as NPs, CNSs, CRNAs, and nursing midwives play a critical role in seeking broader practice areas in nursing, emphasizing primary client care and other specialty areas. They have assumed other tasks out of these roles because of the scarcity of physicians in these areas and the overall nation. Similarly, the emergence of chronic disease management has shifted the role of placing nurses in key roles for patients with chronic diseases and increasingly complex monitoring, education, and coordination skills.

Other literature has stressed the importance of professional updates and staff training to address healthcare delivery changes fully. If nurses do not grasp these important concepts, healthcare will remain non-technological, unrelated, and devoid of useful research findings when it becomes technological and integrated.

Identifying Gaps in Knowledge

As articulated in the literature on the evolution of nursing roles, there are still some outstanding issues in the knowledge. First, there is a shortage of literature on new technological competence requirements that nurses need to cope with such enhancements. Although the role of information technology in the health care sector is well understood and recognized, limited numbers of empirical studies address the question: How can nurses be prepared for using complicated new and developing technologies in their everyday practice?

Second, although extensive research indicates the employment of advanced practice nurses, integrating such roles into collaborative care teams is discussed only sparingly. To promote the effectiveness of these complex positions, examining the dimensions of teamwork and interprofessional is crucial.

Finally, the available literature on the effects of healthcare policy reforms on nursing practice is still very scarce. Although many policies propose methods for workforce development, not many examine the problems nurses encounter when implementing those policies. Less is known about applied research to clarify how policies, including those about nurse staffing, reimbursement, and scope of practice, influence nursing practice.

Methods

Research Methodology

This research uses an exploratory research method and incorporates a literature review, key informant interviews, and case studies to assess some new roles of nurses. The chosen research method enables the study of the topic in its complexity and employs a variety of sources for an extensive analysis.

Research Design and Methodology

The research design involves three key components:

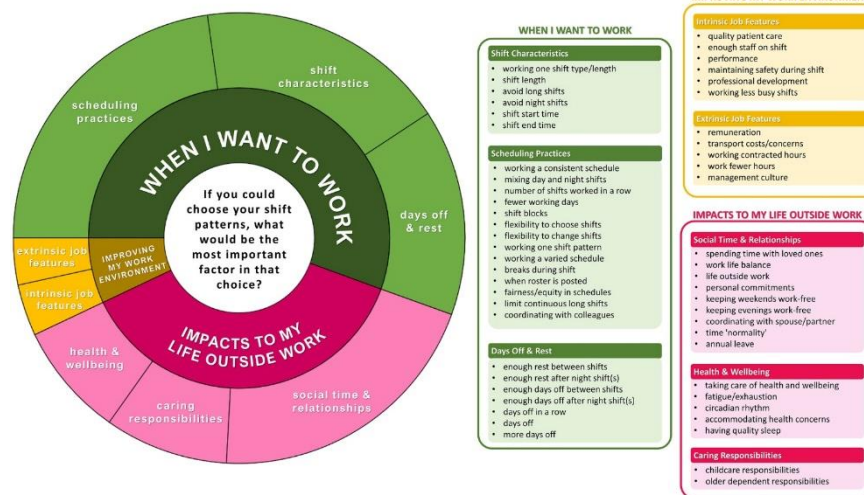
1. Literature Review: A thorough review of existing studies, articles, and reports on nursing roles in the evolving healthcare landscape.
2. Expert Interviews: interviews with nursing leaders, educators, and clinicians to gain insights into their experiences and perspectives on changing nursing roles.
3. Case Studies: Case studies from hospitals and healthcare settings where innovative nursing roles have been successfully implemented.

Data collected from these sources will be analyzed using qualitative methods, and key themes will be identified to address the research questions.

Results and Findings

Figure 1: Shift in Nursing Roles Over Time

The nursing profession has changed dramatically with the changes in health care systems, patient care needs, and technological improvements for the past two decades. Nursing, formally restricted to personnel who deliver care at the patient's bedside, has grown a tentacle into different sectors or fields in health care, including oncology, palliative care, gerontology, and chronic illness management. This move towards more exercise of specialization is due to a change in healthcare delivery, which is moving towards individual and consumer orientation alongside a rapidly growing need for specialized knowledge in specific areas.



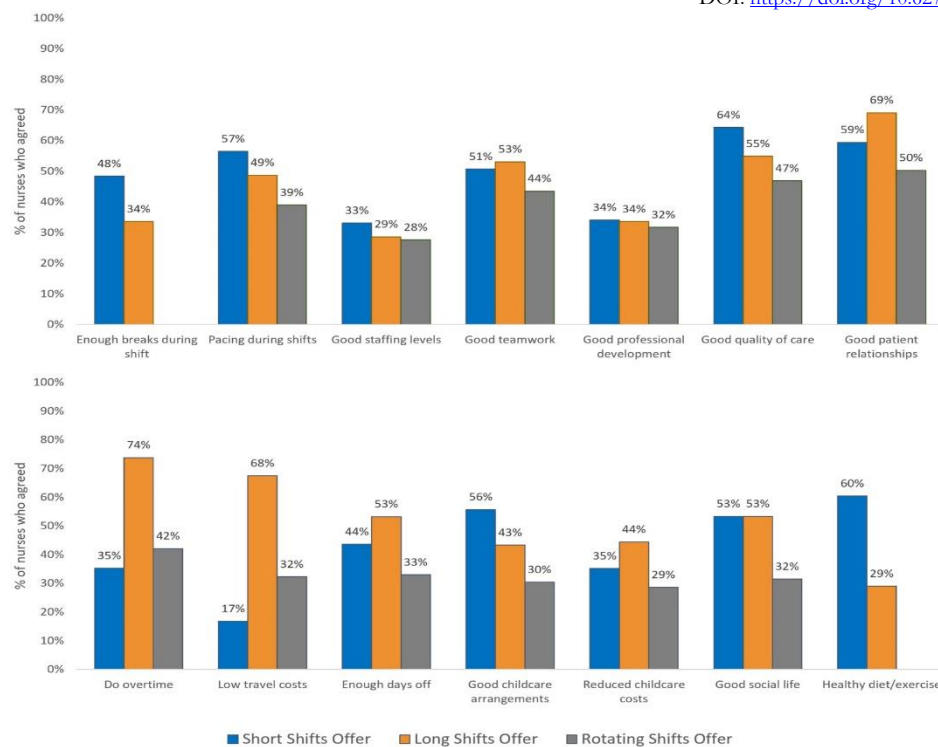
(Hassmiller & Reinhard, 2016)

Early in the twenty-first century, the role of a nurse was mainly descriptive, doing direct care most of the time under the supervision of physicians. However, when the structure of the healthcare system was already in its development, factors such as chronic diseases, an increase in life expectancy, and the availability of sophisticated treatments modified the specifics of nursing to implement the need for the focused knowledge of nurses. I believe it was around this time that nurses started assuming responsibilities that demanded additional knowledge about specific demographic groups, including those suffering from cancer, terminal illnesses, or multiple diseases. Such specific positions required additional education and preparation of nurses, which contributed to the evaluation of advanced practice nurses (APNs), including nurses T practitioners (NPs) and clinical nurses specialists (CNSs), to offer special dealing with issues like oncology, car divan, and palliative care.

Parallel with this general tendency toward role specialization, the dynamics of healthcare technology continue to redesign the nature of nursing. The advancements in the application of EHRs, telemedicine, and CDSS have revolutionized healthcare delivery. Nurses are now also mandated to interact with these technologies for charting, besides using the same to make decisions, observe patient progress, and plan care accordingly. For example, in telehealth, current and future roles involve:

- Remote patient monitoring.
- Performing and managing telemedicine consultation and monitoring.
- Follow-up care that calls for technological communication skills and technology-reliant 'touch' differs from face-to-face patient handling.

Further on, the new global emphasis on patient-centered care has also played its part in contributing to the growth of the scope of nursing practice. Over the last three decades, several healthcare organizations have shifted towards a collaborative and team-based approach to care. Thus, nurses are involved in providing decisions regarding care and coordination. Thus, nurses are listeners and executors of orders from physicians and decision-makers regarding the directions in the patient's treatment process, educators of the populace, and providers of treatment. This has resulted in nurses taking on leadership roles in the health care teams, developing patient care plans, and offering useful information to the management due to their interaction with the patients.



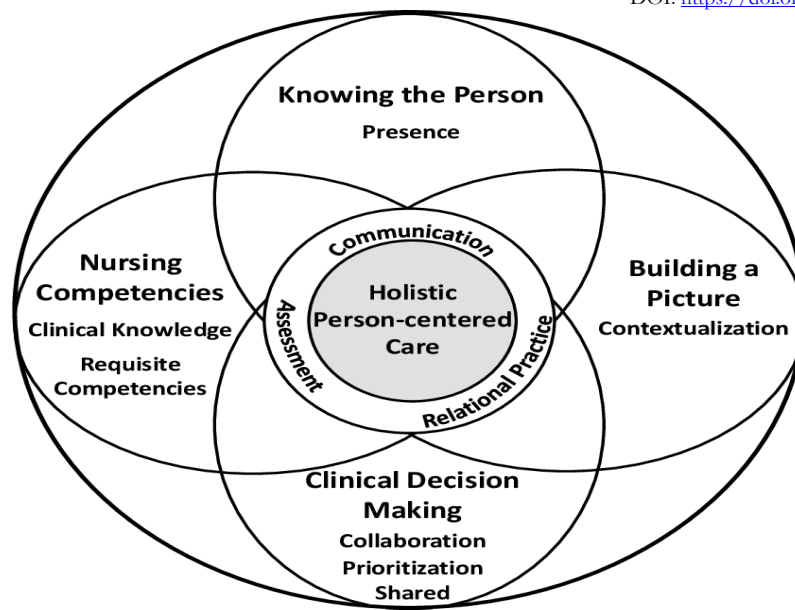
(Aiken et al., 2017)

The change of roles played by nurses over the recent past may also be attributed to changes in healthcare policies. Bureaus of nursing worldwide and ministries of health have realized the need for an expanded, educated, and skilled nursing force to address today's complex healthcare milieu. Therefore, countries have taken measures toward expanding roles in nurse practice through policy change, replacing tasks that physicians previously performed. For instance, legislative changes allow nurse practitioners to prescribe drugs, order tests, and even provide first, second, and sometimes even third-level care, especially in rural or difficult-to-staff areas. These policy changes reflect the new view of nurses as teammates on the healthcare team and are crucial to the country's healthcare needs (Aiken et al., 2017; Alzyoud et al., 2024; Alolayyan et al., 2024).

In conclusion, Figure 1 depicts a transition of nursing roles from basic-level positions to advanced and technology-centered positions. Demography, technology, health policies, and patient outcomes have influenced the change. Professional nurses have emerged to take the central role in healthcare delivery, and their roles have expanded to influence how organizations deliver healthcare.

Figure 2: Technological Competencies in Nursing Practice

The figure describes key areas of interest in current healthcare practices and nursing and addresses how technology has influenced nursing practice over the years. EHRs and related tools, such as telemedicine and CDSS, have become standard additions to a healthcare system's functions, creating major shifts in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes expected of nurses. The results of interviews with experts and literature analysis complement each other, emphasizing the need for technological competency in contemporary nursing.



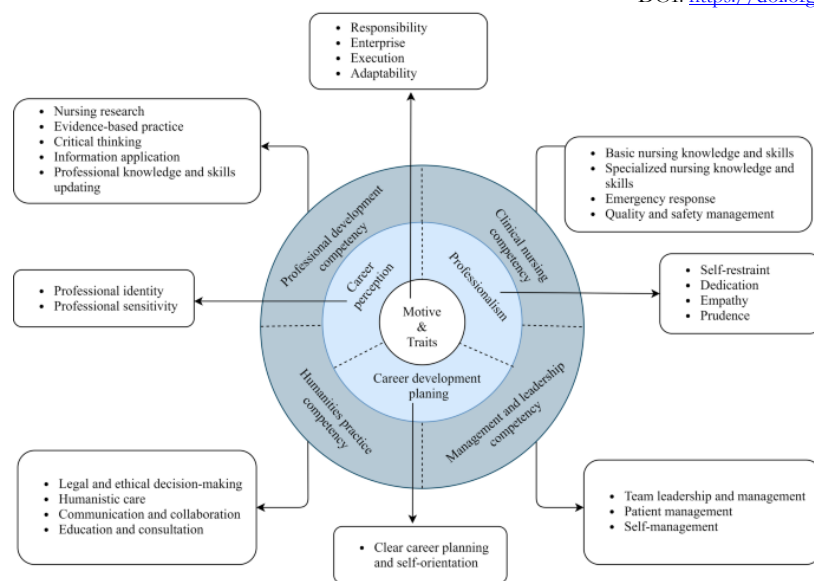
(Thomas & Ryan, 2015)

One of the greatest innovations that has transpired in healthcare is the implementation of electronic health records (EHRs). Technological advancement has continued to put more responsibility on the nurses as they now enter patients' data in digital forms that need one to master the EHR systems. This includes entering any changes in the patient's vital signs, medications given, laboratory results, and progress notes collected throughout the shift. Another key role that EHRs play in effective care coordination is that several healthcare providers can leverage the record on a particular patient, which aids in avoiding confusion and helps to accomplish the pervasive understanding of an individual patient within various care teams (Wakefield & Craft, 2019; Ghaith et al., 2023; Alolayyan et al., 2018). It, therefore, means they should not only be conversant with EHR software but also know the best ways to use the system to improve the quality of patient care and maintain patient information privacy.

Of the many roles within the burgeoning field of technologies in and applications of telemedicine, where technological competence is a rapidly growing imperative. Since the healthcare industry strives to shift its focus to providing care away from the hospital, nurses are frequently left to coordinate telemedicine services and offer remote follow-up care. Such involves:

- Scheduling video consultations.
- Following up with patients with chronic illnesses through telemedicine and health outreach.
- Providing patient information on telemedicine technologies.

Nurses must be proficient communicators capable of managing technology problems so that telemedicine appointments are problem-free. Telemedicine emerged due to the COVID-19 crisis; however, its popularity will not diminish, as patients and physicians have already learned about the advantages of teleconsultation.



(Wahr et al., 2016)

This is in addition to EHRs and telemedicine, for which the nurses must also provide clinical decision support systems (CDSS); these systems offer real-time, evidence-based advice in implementing clinical decisions. By using CDSS, nurses can believe or discover the potential of drug interactions, assess patients' usual vital status, and document or evaluate the status of the patient's progress; thus, care could be provided in a timely and right manner. They must also know how to translate the outcomes of the recommendations given by these systems, once again, a process that involves not merely the computer scientist's ability and knowledge but also the critical analysis and clinical inference of the nurse.

The interviews undertaken for this paper showed that nurses in different roles and work settings expressed a high interest in and a mandatory need for training in the technological domains in which they were concerned. It was found that many nurses gave feedback that although they are employed in a technology-progressive institution, they are still not mastering the use of these technologies, especially in EHRs and CDSS. However, the need is being felt to have enhanced training activities that afford practical exposure to these technologies in learning and professional updating of the nursing profession.

As the roles of information technology are enhanced in the health care system, it is clear that nurses should have high technological competence. Building on this and as healthcare organizations embrace more technologies to shape the future of care delivery, nurses must be ready to integrate technology to optimally deliver patient-level care, organize care delivery processes, and support the effective flow of care. To this end, it will be important to carry out constant training among the healthcare providers in healthcare technologies.

Consequently, Figure 2 shows the areas where it is most imperative for nurses to obtain competencies, namely, EHRs, telemedicine, and clinical decision support systems. While advancements in technology in healthcare lead to the delivery of efficient and effective standards, nursing ought to adapt to this technological change and, in fact, lead to the implementation of these technologies in patient care delivery (Varpio et al., 2018; Al-Hawary et al., 2020; Rahamneh et al., 2023).

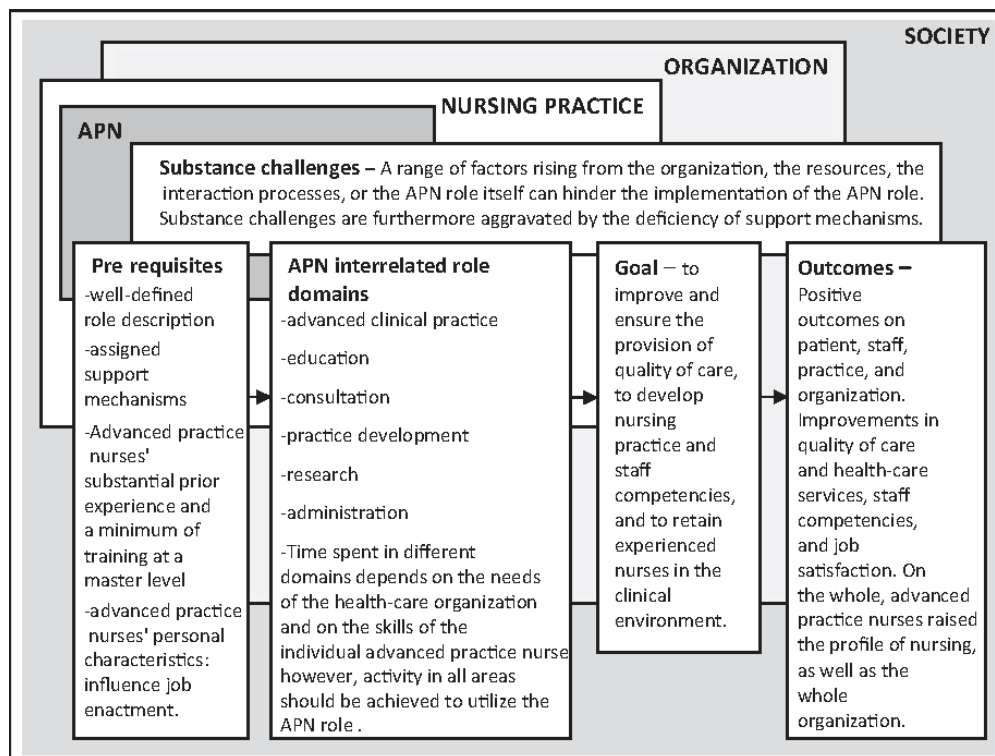
Table 1: Advanced Practice Nursing Roles and Responsibilities

The roles of Key Stallion IV-Advanced Practice Nurses (APN) have emerged as important in the changing healthcare structure, and the duties of APNs differ in various healthcare organizations and patient care. Table 1 summarizes the roles of advanced practice nursing, where we have presented nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, nurse anesthetists, and nurse midwives. Though the roles of bedside nurse and

nurse executive are different, both of these positions are involved in patient care, management, and functioning within a caring team in today's healthcare environment with complexity.

Advanced Practice Nurses come in different forms; nurse practitioners (NPs) are probably the most famous. Some are at least master's prepared, and many, if not all, have clinical training and are fully licensed to provide ambulatory care, diagnose and treat patients' diseases, prescribe medications, and manage patients' chronic illnesses. Academic prepare NPs for practice in different specialties, such as family practice, pediatrics, or geriatrics, and NPs frequently function as PCP, especially in the shortage areas (Varpio et al., 2018; Al-Nawafah et al., 2022; Mohammad et al., 2024). NPs also go further than diagnosing and treating patients by educating, preventing, and promoting health among the patients. In some areas, NPs have the prescription and interpretation of diagnostic tests and outcomes to add to their mandate in health care delivery.

CNSs are master's-prepared advanced practice registered nurses who focus on specific populations, disease processes, or settings. They practice in hospitals or other specific care settings, contributing to the analysis, planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of client clinical care therapies. CNSs usually specialize in certain practice areas, such as oncology, cardiology, or critical care. They contribute to establishing care delivery models, educating other professionals, and directing improvement projects.



(World Health Organization, 2020)

Another group of APNs is certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs) who already specialize in anesthesia. They are not only involved in the giving of anesthesia surgeries, but they also monitor patients during the time of anesthesia and supervise patients' care following anesthesia procedures. This advanced career position necessitates clinical training, usually obtained in a doctoral program, important in the operating room, labor and delivery floor, and pain clinics. The ability and educational preparation of CRNAs enable them to take a lot of responsibility in protecting the anesthesia patient through extensive pharmacological, physiological, and surgical knowledge.

Certified nurse midwives (CNMs) manage women's health care and are responsible for antepartum, intrapartum, and postpartum care and family planning. Apart from the birth process, CNMs perform typical

gynecological tasks, including counseling women on fertility, their sexual health, and the menopausal period. As was seen before, nurse midwives practice individually or jointly with obstetricians and other healthcare professionals, depending on the scope of practice in their country.

As Table 1 shows, a wide range of APRN roles exist with many elements of specification and scope, making the positions diverse and requiring advanced practice. Each of the roles has unique responsibilities, which, however, include advanced education, clinical experience, and leadership. These roles have become part of the healthcare system since they supplement the missing link in delivering care services to patients (National Academy of Medicine, 2020). It is envisaged that with the advancement in the healthcare system, these experts' tasks are likely to diversify even more, implying the need for continued professional training and resources for these healthcare professionals.

- Growth in the roles and scope of practice by the nurses.
- Implementation of new technologies.
- The birth of advanced practice nursing.

It is increasingly common for nurses to perform more focused work, apply technology to their practice, and assume some formal leadership responsibilities in a healthcare team. This kind of investment is important in sustaining nurses' ability to meet the needs of modern-day healthcare delivery systems, therefore making it mandatory to train, develop, and support nurses.

Discussion

From the data analysis of the current study, it is clear that although nursing roles are inarguably expanding to fit fully into the current demands of the healthcare system, several core barriers persist. Although the nurse's role has been expanding over the years, especially in advanced practice, this provokes both opportunities and challenges for nurses. With nurses' shifting roles and features into more specialization and employment of new technologies, they will encounter the problem of expanding their skills and competence to address processing new responsibilities. Such evolution is not without the following challenges and, therefore, deserves a great investment in the education and training of nurses for future healthcare delivery systems.

Expansion of Nursing Roles and Responsibilities

The growth of role expectations of nurses, especially in extended practice, is potentially one of the biggest transformations within the nursing profession. Many nurses, especially advanced practice nurses (APNs), including nurse practitioners (NPs), clinical nurse specialists (CNSs), certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs), and certified nurse midwives (CNMs), are extending care that was hitherto the preserve of physicians. Such trends are seen mostly in primary care, chronic illness treatment, and other complex specialties like oncology and palliative medicine. By so doing, the nurses are now empowered to diagnose ailments, prescribe drugs, and even try to interpret laboratory investigations and manage patients' care singly or in conjunction with other practitioners.

However, this shift towards wider practice responsibilities means much preparation is needed. The nurses are required to be able to make clinical decisions as well as develop and implement care procedures independently. Although some nurses are already pursuing postgraduate certifications and degrees to assume these roles effectively, there is still controversy on whether current nursing education prepares nurses to undertake such roles sufficiently. More and more, the healthcare field is advancing in the direction of specialization. With a growing technology integration, the demand for skilled, knowledgeable nurses remains higher (Institute of Medicine, 2016). This transformation may pressure the nurses since the educational structures required to cater to this change are still missing.

Educational and Training Gaps

Another notable issue revealed in this study is the general lack of concern about a massive investment in nursing education and training. With advancements in the scope of nursing practice, it is important that the content of nursing courses also expand. Present models of nursing education assert that nurses would practice general practice, and these models do not equip students with the knowledge and skills needed in today's technologically advanced system of health facilities. Incorporating higher skills in data, telemedicine, and decision support tools into nursing curricula is important to ensure nurses effectively practice advanced roles.

Another direction that requires improvement in nursing curricula is the preparation for a technology-oriented environment. Another area that calls for professional development is adequate knowledge of using electronic health records (EHRs), telemedicine services, and related clinical support systems that are now part of managing patients' conditions. Technological advancement has further increased the rate of change; thus, nursing programs must be constantly reviewed to incorporate recent technological advancements. Further, given the current trends where healthcare delivery involves a team of workers, the education of nurses also requires enhanced teamwork such that nurses will work hand in hand with physicians, social workers, pharmacists, and other healthcare professionals in delivering quality care.

However, many nurses in today's healthcare workforce may not have undergone this training to keep up with technological advancements. Authorized continuing professional development (ACPD) is crucially effective in providing that practicing nurses require updating on different tools, practices, and guidelines (Institute of Medicine, 2016). There is also the need to include lifelong education and training for nurses because technological advancement can only improve healthcare systems, and the adoption of new healthcare models requires more than just the current set of competent nurses.

Support from Healthcare Systems

Besides enhancing the education and training of nurses, there is an equally important need to ensure that, bearing in mind these emerging roles, the right healthcare support for nurses is in place. This change introduces new technologies and requires a shift towards team-based interprofessional practice, which demands a lot from nurses. Because nurses are at the core of patient care delivery, they must be equipped, facilitated, and encouraged to succeed in these roles. This comprises more than just the availability of access to continued professional training but also the availability of sufficient staff, a reasonable workload, and sufficient time to cover professional development.

Implementing new technologies, such as electronic health records (EHRs), may pose many challenges to nurses due to patient congestion and numerous care demands. Technical specifications for the support of the healthcare organization are required, including IT support for the nurses where needed to work on the technical difficulties of the technology in use. However, as the above-advanced practice roles indicate, the practice demands more accountability, and the accountability that comes with the roles means that the nurse admitted into practice needs to have someone whom he or she can consult, whether for oversight or clinical supervision, as the nurse assumes more leadership roles (Corrigan et al., 2018).

Another factor presents itself as a problem due to the need to cooperate with students from other fields from various faculties/colleges/schools since students will be grouped in interdisciplinary teams. The transformation of healthcare delivery systems to patient-centered and integrated care delivery systems demands that nurses consult with, refer to, or be referred to other professionals from medicine, rehabilitation medicine, pharmacy, and social work. Good teamwork is needed if patients are provided high-quality care integrated across the different doctors. However, working in such teams necessitates a high level of communication and leadership that most nurses may lack in their practice setting. There is a need for healthcare organizations to incorporate educational programs that will enable nurses to participate and assume responsibility for healthcare teams.

Adapting to the Changing Landscape

There is a need to collaborate on nursing education, health policy, and health systems to effectively respond to these challenges. It was established that conservative models of curriculum development for the nursing profession must incorporate interpersonal and leadership competencies and the technical and medical knowledge needed for interdisciplinary relations. Healthcare systems must create a culture, environment, and resources to allow nurses to flourish in their broadening responsibilities (Clarke & Hassmiller, 2016). Armed with knowledge, support, and tools, healthcare organizations and leaders can improve and support nurses' employment to guarantee it as another important and active element of the healthcare system.

Finally, therefore, although opening up new opportunities for the nursing profession, the extension of nurse roles and responsibilities is a model that also poses major challenges that can only be met with proper education, training, and support at the organizational level. Health care continues to change and grow, and nurses must be ready for whatever changes come with the new systems (American Nurses Association, 2019). Through such investments, we can make the right preparations, empower nurses, and cultivate their professionalism to provide effective, superior patient care as required in today's expanding and complex healthcare setting.

Conclusions

The nursing profession is in the process of change in response to the dynamic healthcare environment. One cannot underestimate the challenges that nurses are laden with at present, from advanced practice nursing to technology input and leadership in care coordination. However, for these opportunities to be optimally exploited, efforts must be made to support nurses in meeting these educational, training, and policy challenges. Hence, by financing these sectors, the healthcare systems can ensure that nurses remain integral to the treatment systems.

Recommendation

To ensure that nurses continue to meet the demands of the evolving healthcare system, the following recommendations are made:

1. Enhance Nursing Education: Combine more technology and interprofessional education into nursing training curricula to enable nurses to practice as advanced nurses with sound healthcare technology competencies.
2. Policy Reforms: Call for policy reforms to encourage the growth of advanced practice nurses in primary care and other practice fields.
3. Ongoing Professional Development: Successful year-long programs for assisting the nurse to remain up to date on technology, evidence-based practice, and leadership roles.
4. This way, the nursing profession will be able to continue growing and positively impact the delivery of patient care in the changing healthcare environment, as outlined by the following recommendations.

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