Recommendations from national Finnish projects indicate the need for reorganization of future healthcare, among other due to economical restraints, raising the question of an advanced role for nurses. Nurses are the largest group of healthcare providers. If we can expand nurses’ roles and scope of practice, the quality and cost-effectiveness of health care can be improved. Advanced Practice Nurses (APN’s) has been educated in Finland since 2006. Previous evaluation of the APN role indicate that APNs is not given the opportunity to fully use their competence. Twenty-four APNs participated in focus group interviews. Interviews were also conducted with five executive officials in the region of Ostrobothnia. The aim was to describe the content of the APNs nursing role and what factors promote or inhibit an independent nursing role on an advanced level.

The APN role can be described in terms of professionalism, nursing identity, and a high level of responsibility and independence. Factors promoting the development of the APN role and practice were an identity as a nurse with advanced competency, feedback from satisfied patients and fruitful teamwork. Whereas inhibitive factors were lack of organizational understanding for advanced nursing practice, poor planning leading to unsatisfactory APN models and APNs lack of courage in adopting their new advanced role. The APNs expressed a clear vision to managers and decision makers regarding how the APN role could be developed, in order to improve the efficiency of the role. The interviews with the executive official groups indicate a narrow view of the APN role. As they see APNs scope of practice focusing foremost on follow-up visits for patient with chronical illnesses for example heart diseases and diabetes. Everyone support further education for nurses, however some question the necessity of a master level education. One big challenge to the development of the APN role in Finnish healthcare is the issue of collaboration and teamwork. Hierarchical structures must be loosened if the APN role is to become truly viable. The results of this study have shown the importance of clearly defining the APN role, including expectations of the role: for the APNs themselves and their nursing colleagues, physicians, politicians, decision makers and patients.

Keywords: advanced nursing practice, focus groups, competence, role transition, responsibility

Read more!