

Advanced Practice Nursing in Israel

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History:

Like other western countries, advances in technology and the increasing aging of the population have led to increased specialization within the healthcare system, including the need for nurses to specialize. In addition, health services have been shown to be more limited in the peripheral regions of the country. These trends have been linked to the grass roots development of advanced practice-like roles. For example, many hospitals have positions, similar to those of the Clinical Nurse Specialist or the Nurse Specialist, for nurses to serve as clinical consultants or experts in roles such as Pain Nurse, Stoma Nurse, and Infection Control Nurse. In the community, nurses who work in out patient clinics, especially in the periphery, may practice in roles that are similar to the Nurse Practitioner however their practice is very structured and they work within very delineated and prescribed medical protocols. These nurses are given the authority to perform these roles by their institutions. While they have advanced clinical knowledge and basically function as advanced practice nurses, these nurses do not have the legal title or authority to practice over and above any other registered nurse. They also do not have the autonomy, independence or legal liability to practice as specialists. Most of the nurses who pioneered these roles were taught as apprentices to physicians and some were trained by attending courses and/or conferences outside of the country.

Until relatively recently, the only formal advanced training for nurses was provided in post-basic certification courses in specific clinical areas such as critical care, oncology, geriatrics, midwifery and dialysis. Nurses complete a theoretical and clinical program mandated by the Nursing Division within the Ministry of Health. These courses range from several months to 1.5 years in length. At the end of this period, nurses take a national licensing specialization exam. The Nursing Division in the Ministry of Health determines the curriculum of the programs and administers these licensure exams. Those who receive post basic licensure are entitled to perform certain procedures that are considered to be delegated to them from medical practice that are beyond the scope of practice of the generalist registered nurses. These programs were often taught within schools of nursing however they were not within an academic framework and no degree is offered to the graduates of these programs. However, approximately 50% of registered nurses have some type of post basic certification. This high percentage is most probably due to the significant increase in salary above that of the generalist registered nurse to those who obtain post basic certification and to the Ministry of Health requirement that certain specialty areas such as critical care units hire nurses with post basic certification.

There are four universities that offer masters degrees in nursing. One program focuses only in nursing research, another in nursing education and administration with some clinical component. The third program contains theoretical courses of a clinical nature but does not include any clinical experiences. Only one university offers a

masters degree in advanced nursing practice where students are taught both theoretical and clinical advanced practice skills within the same program.

Current status:

In 2009, the first advanced practice role was approved by the Ministry of Health, the Nurse Specialist in Palliative Care. The legal authority for this role was given by executive order by the director general of the Ministry of Health. Nurse Specialists in Palliative Care must be a registered nurse, have a masters degree in nursing, have post basic certification in either Geriatrics or Oncology, have finished a 1 year course in palliative care (not within an academic framework) and work 3 years under the supervision of a Palliative Care nurse who was already certified. Only then can the applicant take a licensure exam. If one passes, then he/she can be called a Nurse Specialist in Palliative Care. Initially, nurses were grandfathered in as Nurse Specialists who had either a baccalaureate and/or a masters in nursing, post basic certification in Geriatrics or Oncology, have worked for a minimum of 5 years in Palliative Care (not Oncology) and be approved by a committee. Some 50 nurses were grandfathered in and now there are two academic programs in place that teach the course in palliative care. The first exam is scheduled after 2012.

At present, a pilot project was recently begun at one institution to train nurse specialists in Geriatrics/Gerontology.

In summary, the advanced practice role exists in Israel, mostly at the grass roots level however more recent developments and policies have been promoting the legal authority for this role.

Reference:

<http://www.health.gov.il/> in Hebrew

<http://www.health.gov.il/English/Pages/HomePage.aspx> in English