

Putting Developmental, Behavioral and Mental Health PNP-PC Program Content on the Map!

Background: COVID-19 brought increased attention to the immense, and often unmet, behavioral, developmental, and mental health needs of children and adolescents nationwide and the lack of trained clinicians to meet the needs of this population. Pediatric Nurse Practitioners are in a unique position to assist to fill this gap through comprehensive care that includes developmental, behavioral, and mental health screening, assessment, treatment, and referral within pediatric primary care practice. However, PNP students need tailored education to successfully integrate development, behavioral and mental health services into primary care.

Aims of the Project: The purpose of this project was to map the current PNP-PC curriculum content related to developmental, behavioral, and mental health and then to identify potential gaps, redundancies, and opportunities for enhancement of the curriculum in these key areas.

Details of the Project: The PNP faculty began by mapping all curriculum content, including diagnoses, screening/risk assessment tools, pharmacology/nonpharmacologic agents, and therapies/interventions from all pediatric primary care courses. Additionally, faculty were asked to determine if content was introduced or reinforced from previous content. The researchers then developed a content map that traced content focused on developmental, behavioral, and mental health throughout the curriculum. We then compared the content map to the PNCB Pediatric Primary Care Mental Health Specialist Content Outline (2021).

Outcomes: The curriculum map provided a detailed view of the current content focused on development, behavioral, and mental health content. It has allowed us to enhance our curriculum to better prepare PNP-PC students to meet the needs of children and adolescents in primary care and help to narrow some of the current practice gaps.

Discussion: This project has important implications for enhancing the training of primary care providers in screening, assessment, management, and referral in developmental, behavioral, and mental disorders within the context of a PNP-PC program of study. Additionally, the curriculum map allowed us to create and add focused didactic and clinical summative courses to our curriculum.

Index terms: curriculum map, pediatric nurse practitioner, mental health

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