

Pediatric-focused Nurse Practitioners: A Qualitative Examination of Perceptions of Role Recognition

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Background

- Pediatric-focused nurse practitioners (NPs) play an essential role in achieving optimal child health.¹
- However, pediatric-focused NPs are a small portion of the overall NP workforce which introduces challenges gaining recognition for their role caring for children.^{1,2}
- Further, despite demand for pediatric-focused NP care, barriers, including organizational regulations and state scope-of-practice restrictions, limit role implementation.³⁻⁷
- Few studies have examined barriers to implementing pediatric-focused NP roles.

Objective

- The purpose of this study was to identify challenges in pediatric-focused NPs' practice that limit their role recognition and ability to provide care.

Methods

- We conducted secondary data analysis of a cross-sectional mixed-methods survey of pediatric-focused NPs conducted by the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners in the Fall of 2021 .
- Sample
 - 980 pediatric-focused NPs, most provided an open-ended question response (n=952, 97.1%)
 - Primary Care PNP (n=665, 67.4%) , Acute Care PNP (n=149, 15.1%) , other NP certification (n=259, 26.4%), NP student (n= 44, 4.5%)
 - Nearly half (n=421, 43.0%) had 15+ years of NP experience
- Analysis
 - Inductive thematic analysis⁸ of one open-ended question: What is the biggest challenge to the pediatric-focused NP role?
 - Using iterative thematic analysis, 18 themes emerged; this poster focused on 6 themes related to role recognition.

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Results

Biggest Challenges Related to “Who We Are”

A. Role recognition

“Having our role be secondary to MD role. That it [is] so often still asked- is it ok if you see the nurse practitioner instead? As if it is less good alternative.”

“Nurse Practitioner is not commonly understood. Also, patients don't know what to call me so they call me "doctor" even though they know I'm a NP.”

C. Education Quality

“Inconsistency in the academic and clinical preparation of nurse practitioners has resulted in a large disparity in the quality of the providers and since many times we are judged by our least qualified it leads to a distrust at times by sections of physicians.”

“Lack of quality clinical sites for education. The current model for practicing NP's to "take a student" without time or financial compensation is going to be outdated in the environment of health care provider burnout...”

Biggest Challenges Related to “What Can We Do”

E. Be Valued as Pediatric Experts

“PNPs are expert clinicians...I am concerned that PNPs are going to become superfluous.”

“Others (non NPs) seeing the value and training of PNP vs FNP in pediatric positions. MDs in my area have limited understanding of training and scope of different types of NPs .”

B. Certification Alignment

“Family NPs getting PNP jobs, and no set policy for what jobs truly require AC vs PC certification. There is no standard across the country.”

“The existing ambiguity for children's hospitals re: which patients a primary care vs. acute care focused PNP can manage. “

D. Workforce Capacity

“Titles! Pediatric-focused NP vs PNP is a major source of confusion...workforce pipeline is under threat with exponential growth of FNP”

“That we [PNPs] are a dying breed. Universities and colleges prefer to promote the FNP over the PNP...”

“Preserving, protecting, and growing the PNP role. We need to continue to advocate for more PNP programs.”

F. Work to Full Scope

“Right now, it would be finding clinic positions that allow us to work to our full potential.”

“Practicing role fully without interference from hospital/clinic by laws.”

“freedom/permission to provide care within scope of practice”

Conclusions

- Barriers to role recognition include:
 - A lack of understanding of the NP role among healthcare providers and consumers
 - Ambiguity related to differences in the multiple types of NP certifications
 - Variability in the quality of NP education
- Respondents perceived the value of their pediatric expertise was underappreciated by other healthcare providers and organizations.
- Scope of practice barriers limit pediatric-focused NPs across care settings.

Limitations

- A relatively small and experienced sample of pediatric-focused NPs responded; findings may not generalize to all pediatric-focused NPs but can inform future strategies to increase role recognition.
- Because this was a secondary data analysis, there was no ability to seek clarifying information.

Implications

- Pediatric-focused NPs describe a need to elevate visibility of the NP profession, gaining greater role recognition in the care of children.
- More effort is needed to bring awareness to the expertise and capabilities of the specialized pediatric NP workforce.
- Future work should address barriers to role recognition to increase the ability of pediatric-focused NPs to fully contribute to meeting child healthcare needs.

Scan for Additional Quotes, IRB Statement and References

