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Developing an advance practice nurse role in Pakistan: a qualitative study

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The advanced practice nurse (APN) is a masters prepared registered nurse with sound knowledge and clinical expertise for expanded practice which is defined by the country in which APN practices. The growth of the APN role has shown profound healthcare development outcomes including improvement in quality of patient care and patient safety, mitigation of the physician shortage in underserved areas, improved perception of the public image of nursing, and cost of delivery. The APN role was established in the 1960s in the United States. After five decades, approximately fifty countries have adopted the APN model. However, Pakistan healthcare system has yet to embrace the APN role.

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this study is to identify nurses' knowledge and perception about developing an advance practice nurse role in Pakistan.

Methodology: Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted among nurses from all over Pakistan. Data analysis was performed by thematic analysis using thematic network.

Results: The preliminary data analysis revealed that nurses believed introducing APN role in Pakistan will enhance accessibility of healthcare in the underserved areas. In tertiary care settings, APN will bring consistency in care delivery which will improve quality of care. APN will deliver a cost-effective care and will be more approachable. Additionally, establishing APN role will improve nurses' image and career prospects which will increase nurses retention and satisfaction rate. However, nurses expressed that Pakistan's political and legislative structure, opposition from the physicians, lack of quality nursing education, and unacceptability from general public would be the major limitations for establishing APN role. Some nurses also expressed the opposition from seasoned nurses and nursing leaders as one of the barriers.

Conclusion and significance: It is critical to develop APN role in Pakistan to address the growing need for healthcare access, improved patient and population outcomes, and increased recognition of nursing profession and career opportunities.

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