





ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSING IN ONCOLOGY, WHAT IS IT AND WHY SUPPORT ITS DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION IN EUROPE

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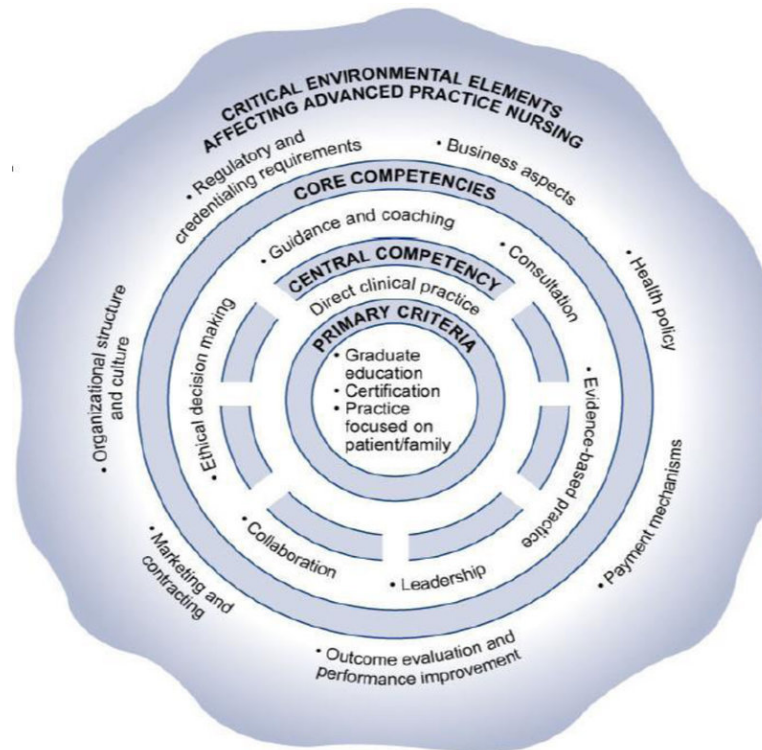
The International Council of Nurses, defines advanced practice nurses (APNs) as a “registered nurse who has acquired the expert knowledge base, complex decision-making skills and clinical competencies for expanded practice, the characteristics of which are shaped by the context and/or country in which they are credentialed to practice.” (ICN, 2020).

There are different advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) roles, even though they all share similar origins and characteristics. All APRN roles are built on a foundation of registered nursing knowledge and require a minimum education level of a master’s degree. Nurses in these roles undergo extensive theoretical training in advanced physiology, pharmacology, and health assessment, complemented by supervised practical training. Additionally, they must pass national certification exams and obtain appropriate licensure to practice. (International Council of Nurses, 2020; Joel, 2017).

The main APRN roles and their differences are outlined in the following table:

Nurse Practitioner		Clinical Nurse Specialist		Certified Nurse Midwife		Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist	
Diagnose and treat illnesses Order and interpret diagnostic tests Prescribe	NP 	Consultation, education and expert clinical knowledge to improve patient outcomes and nursing practice Some	CNS 	Women care during family planning, pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum	CNM 	Practice in every setting in which anesthesia is delivered Anesthesia administration	CRNA 
medications Manage general patient health		prescriptive and ordering authority					
Bring a comprehensive approach to healthcare and can be found in many medical settings		Experts in specialized areas of nursing		Integral gynecologic, family planning and some primary care services		Providing anesthesia for more than 150 years	

These advanced nursing roles, also share certain core competencies, to include direct clinical practice (central competency), evidence-based practice, leadership, collaboration, ethical decision-making, and mentorship and consultation. All APRNs and the way in which they practice and implement these competencies will be further determined by environmental factors such as regulatory and health policy factors, amongst others (Hamric, et al., 2023).



But what about advanced nursing roles in oncology?

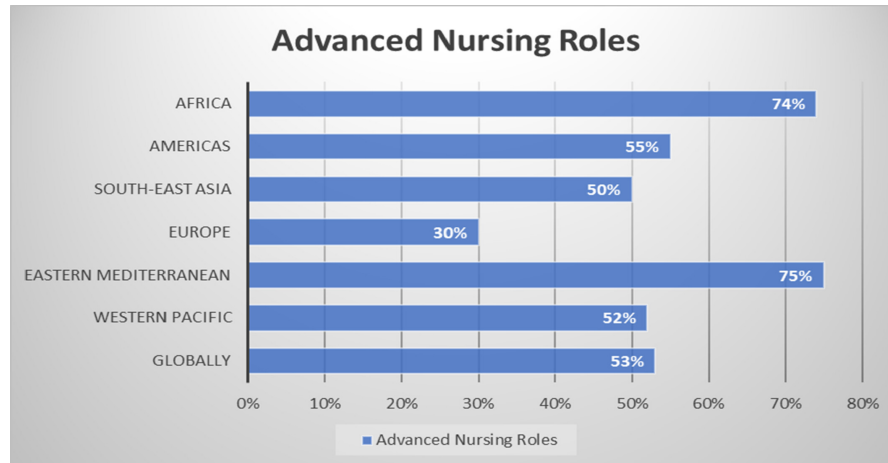
The primary roles within the oncology specialty include the Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) in Oncology and the Nurse Practitioner (NP) in Oncology (ONS, 2016). APRNs in oncology, continue to impact both health systems and patient experience. They are fully integrated into cancer care, and are authorized to work independently or in collaboration, depending on legislation.

The benefits of implementing oncology APRNs are multiple and broad, and do not defer from the benefits seen in other specialties. They enhance access to healthcare, improve clinical excellence and quality of life, improve economic efficiency of health systems, patient outcomes, reduce hospital stays and readmissions, decrease complications, and increase both patient and professional satisfaction amongst others (Joel, 2017; ONS, 2016; ONS, 2019).

These outcomes have been consistent and sustained through different practice settings and specialties since the beginning of their implementation (Geller, 2021). To date, there is no study that suggests worse patient outcomes when care is provided by an APRN vs. a physician (Newhouse, et al., 2011).

Nevertheless, Europe is the geographical area with least development and implementation of these nursing roles, as shown in the graph below (De Raeve et al., 2024). Given the obvious challenges that the

World and Europe are facing, including increase in patient population, longevity, increase in the prevalence of chronic diseases, as well as increase in cancer incidence and morbidity, APRN roles could increase access to healthcare while supporting its efficiency and quality.



As the IOM report on the future of the profession (IOM, 2011) recommends, the transformation of the health-care system requires that nurses practice to the full extent of their legal scope and lead change to advance health, and these should include APRN roles.

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