

AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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PREPARING NURSES FOR PRIMARY HEALTH CARE REFORMS

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POLICY CONTEXT

Momentum is growing for a nationally driven and funded, integrated primary care service system in Australia. The Federal government has a clear focus on reforming the health system to strengthen prevention and facilitate care at the primary level. Furthermore, there is growing awareness that quality indicators and measures for optimising care for the population, need to be part of future reforms. Primary and community care nurses are, as part of an integrated team, in an ideal position to play a key role in the delivery of primary care services as long as they are adequately prepared. Future policy development on the practice nurse role needs to be evidence based and work towards nationally consistent standards for:

- the development of primary nursing roles including their place in inter-professional teams
- an education framework that supports those roles and enables nurses to develop and grow as part of inter-professional primary care teams, and
- career pathways to encourage nurses to take up practice nursing positions and sustain a competent workforce of primary care nurses.

KEY FINDINGS

- Significant changes have occurred to the delivery of primary care in the UK since 2000
- Funding is increasingly used to reward outcomes rather than throughput
- Extended nursing roles in primary care have been developed within an overarching national framework in the UK
- Nurses in the UK are central to the achievement of quality outcomes in primary care and are particularly important in the management of chronic conditions
- General practices in the UK have employed more nurses since the introduction of the Quality and Outcomes Framework and these nurses do the bulk of the administrative and much of the clinical work required to achieve QOF targets
- There is some concern amongst nurses that too much time is spent on data entry for QOF and too little with patients. Nurses also report being dissatisfied with how QOF financial incentives are distributed in practices

- Nurses education in the UK is evolving to reflect policy changes towards community care and away from hospital care
- Significant investment has been made in the UK to support the development of inter-professional learning in university medical and health disciplines with inter-professional care being seen as central to the development and delivery of quality health care
- UK health policy is increasingly focused on addressing health inequalities and in providing the right care in the right place at the right time and this is reflected in funding agreements.

POLICY OPTIONS

- Develop a nationally co-ordinated approach to the re-design of nurse education to include community and primary care practice as a significant component
- Fund higher education institutions, working in collaboration with the nursing, medical and allied health professions and government to develop a national model of inter-professional learning that would enhance inter-professional practice
- Reform funding for quality nursing care outcomes in primary care as nurses are essential partners if improved outcomes, especially in chronic disease, are to be achieved
- Appropriate remuneration for primary care nurses will ensure a sustainable workforce
- Develop a nationally co-ordinated approach to implementing a career framework based on education levels, competencies and skills to support professionalism and attract and retain practice nurses
- Reform payment methods for nurses in primary care to enable them to spend more time on prevention and to help address health inequalities in access to care.

METHODS

- We visited the following organisations and interviewed leaders and key researchers who also provided us with extensive grey and black literature about their work:
- The National Primary Health Care and Development Centre at the University of Manchester (NPCRDC), Our interest in this Centre was on health services research, quality, systems for primary care delivery and chronic disease self-management in primary care.
- The University of Southampton, where our interest was on their systematic approach to inter-professional learning and education in undergraduate education and in education for primary care nursing.
- The Centre for the Advancement of Inter-professional Education (CAIPE) to glean information about the various models of IPE being implemented across the UK.
- Professional nursing bodies, policy advisers and practice nurses to explore primary care nursing developments and the roles that primary care nurses play in the health system of the UK.
- Dr Angela Lennox who has pioneered a model of inter-professional learning in Leicester where students learn from the experiences of patients.

Table 1 Key Questions

| Key questions | Sub themes |
|---|---|
| What should primary care be doing and delivering to meet the needs of the population? | From a population health approach, what are the best systems to deliver: Services Quality to optimize care for the population Meet specific population needs Prevention/health promotion |
| How do we organise systematically to deliver that? | Focus on needs of the population/community The system should be designed to meet those needs Practitioners within the system must be able to provide the right services for the right cost, at the right time in the right place – we need to make use of available labour. Affordable access is critical Address health inequalities Flexible progression for nurses With the shift from hospital care to community care , the interface between health and social care Shift in nursing care across the continuum. Nursing services delivered across the care pathway whatever the setting |
| Teams and inter-professional working | Inter-professional learning extended over time and embedded into curriculum at undergraduate level, supported by organisational arrangements and systems in practice. Integrated health and social care teams bridging between hospital and community Team roles in preventive re-admission of people to hospital who have chronic and long term conditions |
| Access and outcomes | Contracting of services Drivers for outcomes How to get the best skill mix |

For more details, please go to the [full report](#)

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