



**Australian
General Practice
Network**



National Divisions Nursing in General Practice Forum 2006

Report on the World Café activity

This report is a synthesis and analysis of the key issues identified by division program officers who participated in the World Café activity at the Nursing in General Practice Divisions National Forum 2006. The World Café was a process used as a group activity to foster conversation and shared collective intelligence around a common theme. Forum participants rotated through small groups with different participants in each group, sharing and connecting ideas and combining their discoveries. The theme for the World Café was: *What is vital to our progress in supporting nursing in general practice?* The thoughts recorded in this report are the common themes expressed by participants in this activity. They are not necessarily ideas supported by AGPN.

Report prepared by: Julie Porritt and Toni Rice

Table of contents

| | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 1. | Recognition and awareness of nursing in general practice..... | 4 |
| 2. | Salaries and Wages | 4 |
| 3. | Division and Board of Management support | 5 |
| 4. | Practice Incentive Payments and Medicare Items..... | 5 |
| 5. | New graduates/ post graduate programs/ career structure | 5 |
| 6. | Education/training and resources..... | 6 |
| 7. | Information for general practitioners..... | 6 |
| 8. | Information technology and information management..... | 6 |
| 9. | Networking opportunities | 6 |
| 10. | General practice environment | 7 |
| 11. | Partnerships | 7 |
| 12. | Funding for practice nurse support programs | 7 |

1. Recognition and awareness of nursing in general practice

Community Awareness

There is a need to increase community awareness of the role of nurses in general practice. Use local media and state based media to promote the role. It is important for consumers to be able to understand what practice nurses can do.

Professional recognition

There is a necessity to raise the profile of practice nurses across the nursing profession. Some suggestions relating to this include the introduction of national standards, and recognition of the skills of practice nurses. Members believed it was important for the peak nursing bodies to support practice nurses to broaden their scope of practice. There were many requests for a national registration for practice nurses, or at least standardisation across nursing boards.

Division recognition

Divisions need to value the role of program support for practice nurses at board level and across their membership. Division programs need to be flexible to meet the needs of nurses.

Empowering practice nurses

Practice nurses need to take ownership of their profession and drive the profession. It is important for divisions and others to listen to the needs of nurses and respond to these needs. Practice nurse need to belong to and support nursing professional organisations and to be empowered to take a proactive role in their profession. Practice nurses must accept responsibility for their own professionalism, be advocates for the role and be prepared to expand their role. They need 'protected time' outside of their clinical role for reflection and development activities.

Universities and nursing students

There is a need to promote the benefits of nursing in general practice to nursing students as they are our potential future workforce. It is important to raise the profile of practice nursing to university schools of nursing.

Evidence

Evidence is required to achieve recognition of the role for practice nurses and to support innovative practice. It is important for divisions to play a role in showcasing successful programs and to provide evidence of what actually works. Practice nurses want to be assured of the value of their role through evidenced based data.

Teamwork

It is important to promote and value the practice nurse role as integral to the general practice team. Practice nurses should be recognised for enhancing service provision, not substituting for GPs. It is essential for the peak bodies (GP and Nursing) to recognise the added value practice nurses bring to the general practice team. Nurses bring a unique body of knowledge to enhance general practice services.

2. Salaries and Wages

There were many requests for improved pay rates for practice nurses to a level commensurate with other nursing sectors (hospitals). Some suggested that state or national awards be established for practice nursing. It was identified that remuneration needed to be aligned with (recognise) the skills and experience of the nurse and their role at the practice. There were requests for a tiered pay structure to allow recognition for post graduate qualifications, advanced roles and responsibilities and to provide a definitive career pathway.

Participants believed that practice nurses need to be supported to develop increased confidence and skills to be able to negotiate their pay and conditions.

3. Division and Board of Management support

Practice nurse support should form part of the Division's strategic plan, and be part of core business. There needs to be commitment and support from Board members and Executive Officers to support the role for practice nurses in general practice. Practice nurse support should be integrated across all division programs. Divisions need to encourage a whole of practice approach. Divisions require adequate resourcing in order to provide specific practice nurse support programs for recruitment, networking opportunities, mentoring and education. The practice nurse support program requires dedicated time sufficient to meet the needs of the program. Divisions need continued support to build their capacity to support practice nurses, including tools and resources. There needs to be systems in place to retain corporate knowledge as program officers leave the division. Divisions need to share resources and experience.

A number of program officers raised the issue of juggling 'many hats' or multiple program roles. They expressed a desire to have support and understanding from their division in order to provide an effective service for all their portfolio responsibilities.

Delegates believed that practice nurses should be offered membership or associate membership to divisions and have voting rights. There was a lot of support for practice nurses to be eligible to become Board members of divisions.

4. Practice Incentive Payments and Medicare Items

There was support for the PN PIP to be available to all practices. There were a small number of requests for the PN PIP to be provided to practices on a tiered basis commensurate with the skills and experience of the nurse.

Delegates believed that practice nurse Medicare items should be evidenced based and available to all practices. There is a requirement to provide (national) standardised education and training programs to support the introduction of new Medicare items. The range of PN Medicare items needs to be increased to continue to support the evolving role for the nurse in general practice. There should be improved national support and information as new Medicare items are introduced. Rebates for Medicare items should be increased to acknowledge the skill and experience of the nurse.

It was suggested by some that the Medicare payments should be directed to the nurse (rather than the GP) in order to overcome the low rates of pay for some nurses.

5. New graduates/ post graduate programs/ career structure

There was very strong support for the placement of nursing students in general practice as part of their clinical experience. This needs to be supported with clear guidelines for divisions, universities and practices about their role and responsibilities. There should to be a feedback system for quality control of placements. There were also calls for undergraduate nursing programs to include a greater focus on primary care.

Post graduate training for practice nurses ought to include opportunities to undertake formal post graduate programs relevant to general practice. There were suggestions for education and training for practice nurses to be flexible and available via multiple avenues.

There was also strong support for the development of a re-entry program for nurses not currently in the workforce that is orientated to general practice and the delivery of primary care services. There were also requests for a graduate program to be developed to support new graduate nurses wanting to enter general practice.

There were a number of comments relating to the provision of supervision for enrolled nurses in general practice. There were also requests to overcome any confusion between the titles and roles of the practice nurse versus the nurse practitioner.

Delegates believed it important to continue to have access to scholarship opportunities to support practice nurses to access education and training.

6. Education/training and resources

A number of delegates requested that CNE points be made compulsory for practice nurse education programs, to add credibility to the programs for nurses, and to endanger respect for these programs from nurses.

A generic national policy and procedure manual is required for the common activities undertaken by practice nurses.

Practices and GPs need to support practice nurses to undertake CPD programs, including the provision of paid study leave. Many believed that GPs need to be better informed about the value of the practice nurse role and the need to support the nurse in relevant education and training. Many delegates identified the need for a cultural shift in general practice to enable this to occur.

It was also acknowledged that there is a requirement for practice nurses to recognise their responsibility to make a commitment to CPD. There was support for combined GP/PN education sessions to support a team based approach to care. A number of delegates recommended the use of GP champions to inform other GPs about the role for practice nurses.

There was a call for GP registrars and medical students to be better informed about the role of the practice nurse, through clinical placements and information sessions in their training programs.

A comment was made about the requirement for an enrolled nurse who wants to undertake graduate studies to become a registered nurse, needing to be employed in the hospital sector rather than general practice. This is seen as a significant barrier for enrolled nurses in this situation who wish to remain in general practice.

7. Information for general practitioners

Many delegates believed that a cultural change needs to occur in general practice in order for GPs to understand a team based approach to care, and the important role for the practice nurse in this team. There were numerous requests to better inform GPs about the role for the nurse through strategies such as using GP champions, combined GP/PN education programs and division support.

There was support for the provision of change management education and training for general practice staff.

8. Information technology and information management

A number of delegates expressed a need for divisions to provide IM/IT support for practices nurses. This included education and training, and access to hardware and software programs to support the practice nurse role. Some examples included Microsoft products, ACIR online, medical software programs and broadband connectivity.

9. Networking opportunities

The need to continue networking opportunities for practice nurses was seen as important. This included collaboration and sharing between divisions, opportunities to network with other nurses

outside of the division, and networking with other organisations and nursing professional bodies such as APNA. There was also a call for improved networking across the general practice team to support team building and clarification of roles.

10. General practice environment

There was recognition of the need to look at alternative strategies in cases where physical space is an issue to accommodate a practice nurse. Some suggestions included (the nurse) working from home undertaking home visits/care planning activities, and off-site offices for the nurse. It was highlighted that practice renovations/ future development plans need to accommodate the requirements of the nursing service.

Practice nurse run clinics were seen as a key focus for providing an enhanced role. It was seen as important to share and showcase successful practice nursing models.

A number of issues were raised about supporting the wellbeing of the practice nurse including support for nurses in 'difficult practices', improved HR policies at the practice, protected time for the nurse for reflection and planning, and ensuring nurses aren't overloaded and suffer burnout.

It is valuable for divisions to utilise business models to support the employment and role for nurses in a variety of practice sizes and differing scenarios.

11. Partnerships

A number of delegates identified the benefits for the practice nursing program to create partnership opportunities with local hospitals and community health services. There were also suggestions to develop links with other primary care services providers, state health services and corporate practices.

12. Funding for practice nurse support programs

Division NiGP Programs

Many delegates identified a need for additional funding to increase program officer hours for the NiGP program. There were calls for the practice nurse support program to be integrated into core division funding with an opportunity to access additional funds for specific projects. Once again the need for practice nursing to be integrated with other division programs was highlighted as important. Many delegates called for every division to have dedicated program officer hours for practice nurse support.

It was seen as beneficial to share resources and best practice models across the nation. It was identified as important to ensure sustainability of the program at national, state and division level.

Practice infrastructure grants

There was a call for infrastructure grants to be provided for practices that need additional space in order to be able to employ a nurse.

Australian Government Funding

Many delegates recognised the importance of continued government funding to support nursing in general practice in order to develop an enhanced role for the nurse and to continue to support practices to employ nurses.