



Development of competency standards for nurses in general practice and review of the competency standards for the advanced nurse

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The project to review the competency standards for the advanced nurse and to develop competency standards for nurses in general practice is well underway¹.

The project team comprises Marie Heartfield and Terri Gibson from the University of South Australia and their project manager is Sarah Moody. The Royal College of Nursing, Australia, is working in partnership with the University of SA team and Tessa Pascoe is the contact person. Victoria Gilmore is the ANF project manager and she is working with a steering group that includes the relevant nursing bodies such as the Australian Practice Nurses Association and the Australian Nursing Council. The Australian Divisions of General Practice is a partner in this project which is funded under the Australian Government's nursing in general practice initiative.

A literature review is being prepared with an early emphasis on the advanced nurse in both the Australian and international literature. The title, advanced nurse, has led to confusion as the standards are not designed for expert nurses or advanced practitioners including nurse practitioners. The United Kingdom has a working title - higher level nurse - which is intended to capture nurses who have several years of experience and have generally commenced further education. This is probably closer to the definition used when preparing the competency standards for the advanced nurse, but is it a term that makes sense to Australian nurses? The set of competency standards for the advanced nurse (however titled) used in conjunction with the core competency standards developed by the Australian Nursing Council, should be a useful framework for nurses to use to both assess their practice and to guide their professional development.

Identifying for whom the competency standards are designed and how they can be used are only some of the issues being explored by the project team during the national consultation phase of the project. Workshops have started and will be held in all capital cities and a range of regional centres such as Port Hedland and Mount Gambier. There are workshops looking at the advanced nurse standards and the standards for registered and enrolled nurses working in general practice.

As part of the process to develop the competency standards for enrolled nurses working in general practice, the project team is meeting with experienced enrolled nurses working in a range of settings such as public hospitals, aged care facilities and the community. This step is being undertaken to ensure the benchmark for enrolled nurses working in general practice is consistent with the standards expected of their colleagues working in other settings.

Another e-bulletin will be released in June 2004 and distributed to those registered at anfcanberra@anf.org.au.

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Footnote

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