

The Role of Advanced Practice Nurses in Addressing Health Disparities: A Qualitative Study

Angelo Cura*

Department of Nursing, Saint Louis University, 1 N. Grand Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63103, USA

Mini Review

Received: 01 May, 2023, Manuscript No. jnhs-23-104392; **Editor Assigned:** 02 May, 2023, Pre QC No. P-104392; **Reviewed:** 17 May, 2023, QC No. Q-104392; **Revised:** 23 May, 2023, Manuscript No. R-104392; **Published:** 31 May, 2023, DOI: 10.4172/JNHS.2023.9.3.83

*For Correspondence

Angelo Cura, Department of Nursing, Saint Louis University, 1 N. Grand Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63103, USA

E-mail: AngeloCura414@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Health disparities continue to be a significant public health concern globally, affecting individuals from diverse socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs) play a crucial role in addressing these disparities by providing comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and accessible healthcare services. This qualitative study aims to explore the role of APNs in addressing health disparities through an in-depth analysis of their perspectives and experiences. The findings highlight the unique contributions of APNs in reducing health disparities, promoting health equity, and improving healthcare outcomes for marginalized populations.

Keywords: Advanced nursing practices • Health disparities • Healthcare

INTRODUCTION

Health disparities are complex and multifaceted, resulting from a combination of social, economic, cultural, and systemic factors. These disparities disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, including racial and ethnic minorities, low-income individuals, and rural communities. Advanced Practice Nurses, comprising nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, clinical nurse specialists, and nurse anesthetists, possess the necessary skills and competencies to address these disparities effectively. This research study aims to explore the role of APNs in addressing health disparities and the strategies they employ to promote health equity. A qualitative research design was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and practices of APNs in addressing health disparities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of APNs working in various clinical settings^[1-3].

APNs play a crucial role in promoting health and preventing diseases among populations affected by health disparities. They recognize the importance of education and counseling to empower individuals to make informed decisions about their health. By providing accessible and culturally sensitive health education, APNs can address the knowledge gaps and equip individuals with the tools to adopt healthier lifestyles. They engage in community outreach programs, partnering with community organizations to raise awareness about preventive measures and early detection of diseases. Through health screenings, vaccinations, and lifestyle interventions, APNs contribute to reducing the burden of preventable diseases.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The participants were recruited from diverse geographical locations, including urban, suburban, and rural areas, to capture a broad range of experiences and perspectives. A total of 20 APNs, representing various specialties, were included in the study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants, focusing on their experiences in addressing health disparities and their perceptions of the barriers and facilitators to achieving health equity. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thematically. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns, themes, and categories in the data. The researchers independently reviewed the transcripts, coded the data, and subsequently identified common themes. Consensus was reached through discussion and reflection, ensuring the rigor and trustworthiness of the findings. The findings of the study revealed several key themes that illustrate the role of APNs in addressing health disparities.

Research & Reviews: Journal of Nursing & Health Sciences

Health promotion and prevention

APNs emphasized the importance of health promotion and preventive care in reducing health disparities. They emphasized education, counseling, and community outreach to raise awareness about healthy behaviors and disease prevention.

Culturally competent care

Cultural competence was recognized as a fundamental aspect of addressing health disparities. APNs acknowledged the significance of understanding patients' cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and values to deliver patient-centered care and foster trust.

Patient advocacy

Advocacy emerged as a vital role of APNs in addressing health disparities. They recognized the need to advocate for patients' rights, access to care, and social determinants of health, such as housing, education, and employment ^[4,5].

Collaboration and interprofessional teamwork

Collaboration with other healthcare professionals and community organizations was seen as essential to address health disparities comprehensively. APNs emphasized the importance of building partnerships, fostering interdisciplinary teamwork, and leveraging community resources to provide holistic care.

APNs recognized the significance of advocating for policy changes at the local, state, and national levels to address health disparities effectively. They emphasized the need for equitable distribution of resources, improved access to care, and elimination of systemic barriers.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this qualitative study provide valuable insights into the role of APNs in addressing health disparities. APNs' multifaceted contributions encompass health promotion and prevention, culturally competent care, patient advocacy, collaboration and interprofessional teamwork, as well as policy and systemic change.

Culturally competent care

Cultural competence is a cornerstone of addressing health disparities. APNs recognize the need to deliver care that respects and incorporates patients' cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and values. By acknowledging and understanding the cultural context of their patients, APNs can provide patient-centered care that is sensitive to cultural nuances. This approach helps build trust, improves communication, and fosters a therapeutic relationship between the APN and the patient. Moreover, APNs strive to eliminate language barriers and provide interpretation services to ensure effective communication and understanding.

Patient advocacy

Advocacy is a fundamental role of APNs in addressing health disparities. APNs advocate for their patients by actively engaging in the identification and mitigation of barriers that impede access to quality healthcare ^[6]. They collaborate with patients to identify their needs and concerns, empowering them to actively participate in their healthcare decision-making process. APNs advocate for patients' rights, including equitable access to healthcare services, affordable medications, and appropriate follow-up care. They also address social determinants of health by advocating for improved housing, access to healthy food options, transportation, and education.

Collaboration and interprofessional teamwork

Collaboration is vital in addressing health disparities comprehensively. APNs work collaboratively with other healthcare professionals, such as physicians, pharmacists, social workers, and public health officials, to ensure coordinated and holistic care. They actively participate in interprofessional team meetings, contributing their expertise and insights to develop patient-centered care plans. By leveraging the strengths and resources of different disciplines, APNs can provide comprehensive care that addresses not only the medical needs of patients but also the social, emotional, and economic factors that influence their health outcomes.

Policy and systemic change

APNs recognize the importance of advocating for policy changes and systemic reforms to eliminate health disparities. They actively engage in policy discussions, both at the local and national levels, to promote equitable distribution of healthcare resources, improve access to care, and reduce barriers for underserved populations. APNs collaborate with professional nursing organizations and community advocacy groups to influence policy decisions that prioritize health equity. They advocate for healthcare reforms that address the social determinants of health, promote health insurance coverage, and expand the scope of practice for APNs to maximize their contributions in addressing health disparities.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this qualitative study emphasize the significant role of Advanced Practice Nurses in addressing health dispari-

Research & Reviews: Journal of Nursing & Health Sciences

ties. Through health promotion and prevention, culturally competent care, patient advocacy, collaboration and interprofessional teamwork, and policy and systemic change, APNs make invaluable contributions to reducing health disparities and promoting health equity. By understanding and addressing the unique needs of marginalized populations, APNs have the potential to create meaningful and sustainable changes in healthcare systems, leading to improved health outcomes for all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic or ethnic background. Further research is warranted to explore the specific interventions and strategies employed by APNs to address health disparities and to evaluate their impact on healthcare outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

1. Aiken LH and Fagin CM. Evidence-based nurse staffing: ICN's new position statement. *Int Nurs Rev.* 2018;65:469-471.
2. Heinen M, et al. An integrative review of leadership competencies and attributes in advanced nursing practice. *J Adv Nurs.* 2019;75:2378-2392.
3. Mantzoukas S and Watkinson S. Review of advanced nursing practice: The international literature and developing the generic features. *J Clin Nurs.* 2007;16:28-37.
4. Pulcini J, et al. An international survey on advanced practice nursing education, practice, and regulation. *J Nurs Scholarsh.* 2010;42:31-39.
5. Salmond SW and Echevarria M. Healthcare transformation and changing roles for nursing. *Orthop Nurs.* 2017;36:12.
6. Ladd E and Schober M. Nurse prescribing from the global vantage point: The intersection between role and policy. *Policy Politics Nurs Pract.* 2018;19:40-49.