

Determining the Role of the Nurse with a Doctor of Nursing Practice Degree

Anna Song Beeber, PhD, RN; Cheryl Jones, PhD, RN, FAAN;
Carrie Palmer DNP, CRNP; Julee Waldrop DNP; Mary Lynn PhD, RN

Objective: The role of the DNP outside of academic settings has not been explored and the value that DNP-prepared nurses bring to their practice settings is largely unknown. This study aimed to survey existing DNP programs to identify the non-academic settings into which their DNP graduates are employed and conduct semi-structured interviews with employers to identify the role of the DNP prepared nurse in non-academic settings.

Data/Setting: Data were collected from December 2016-August 2016 in two parts: 1) an online survey of the DNP programs; and 2) qualitative semi-structured telephone interviews with employers.

Design/Methods: The online survey examined the types of non-academic institutions that hire DNP graduates. Employers were identified either by DNP program directors through the online survey (34 employers) or by a convenience sampling method (12 employers). Descriptive analyses and content analyses were performed to identify the roles and practice settings in which DNP-prepared nurses were employed.

Results: A total of 130 DNP program directors responded to the online survey (45% response rate). 23 employers participated in telephone interviews. Employers described the role of the DNP-prepared nurse as Advanced Practice Nurses (APN) providing patient care or as leaders, administrators, and managers. Employers identified that the DNPs practicing as APNs had less flexibility (in terms of time in their day and availability to fill in for other staff), while DNPs in leadership roles were flexible to fill in for administrators and managers.

Conclusions: The role of the DNP-prepared nurse in non-academic settings is not clearly defined. These nurses appear to typically function as APNs in clinical care or as a health care system leaders. However, the number of DNPs in these settings is still limited making it challenging to clearly articulate the role of DNPs in various settings.

Key Words: Doctor of Nursing Practice, Advance Practice Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, DNP role

HWRC Website Link: www.healthworkforce.unc.edu