

AORN White Paper: Doctor of Nursing Practice

Purpose Statement

This document provides information on the DNP degree and its application to the perioperative setting.

Role Definition

The Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) is a terminal practice degree whose goal is to prepare nurses to assume leadership roles in clinical practice, clinical teaching, and action research. The emphasis is less on theory and initiation of research and more on advanced clinical practice, research utilization, and evaluation of practice and care delivery models.¹

Proposed Education

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) task force recommends that the DNP include 8 areas of content:

1. Scientific underpinnings for practice;
2. Organization and system leadership/management, quality improvement, and system thinking;
3. Clinical scholarship and analytical methods for evidenced-based practice;
4. Information systems/technology and patient care technology for the improvement and transformation of health care;
5. Health policy for advocacy in health care;
6. Interprofessional collaboration for improving patient and population health outcomes;
7. Clinical prevention and population health for improving the nation's health; and
8. Advanced nursing practice.²

Course selection will be dependent upon preexisting degree. "Curriculum will differ in emphasis based on the particular specialties for which students are being prepared"² and may include courses in

- ú advanced pathophysiology,
- ú advanced pharmacology,
- ú advanced physical assessment,² and

ú informatics and technology.

Perioperative Application

The AACN defined role characteristics for the DNP follow with interpretative applications for perioperative practice: ²

ROLE	PROPOSED PERIOPERATIVE FUNCTION
1. Scientific underpinnings for practice	Applies complex theories of practice into patients' and health systems' plans of care.
2. Organization and system leadership/management, quality improvement, and system thinking	Contributes perioperative expertise in consultative services for the development of clinical policy, process improvement, patient safety and facilitates organization-wide changes in health care delivery.
3. Clinical scholarship and analytical methods for evidenced based practice	Utilizes evidence-based practice by translating research findings into clinical applications to improve patient and population outcomes.
4. Information systems/technology and patient care technology for the improvement and transformation of health care	Develops information and technology modalities to access and disseminate information to support perioperative care and health care systems (eg, PNDs).
5. Health policy for advocacy in health care	Provides leadership in effecting positive changes in professional, social, political, and ethical situations to advance perioperative nursing, health care, and health policy.
6. Interprofessional collaboration for improving patient and population health outcomes	Analyzes complex clinical and organizational issues to facilitate collaborative interdisciplinary team functioning to impact perioperative patient outcomes.

7. Clinical prevention and population health for improving the nation's health	Analyzes bio-psycho-social, occupational, epidemiological, and environmental data to proactively assess needs of perioperative patients and populations to develop optimal health promotion and risk reduction strategies. Evaluates effectiveness of interventions and strategies on actualized patient outcomes.
8. Advanced nursing practice	Manages safe, competent care to perioperative patients as defined by AORN Perioperative Advanced Practice Nurse (APN) competency statements. ³ Obtains national certification.

Conclusion

This degree was developed to provide parity with terminal practice degrees in other professions (eg, physicians, pharmacists, dentists, psychologists). “Master’s prepared advanced practice nurses have identified additional knowledge that is needed for a higher level of advanced practice.”⁴ The impact on current advanced practice nurses, specifically the Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), is not known. The identified role and future for CNS practice has not been clearly defined with regard to integration into the DNP model.⁵ National nursing organizations are engaging in discussion to achieve consensus on the evolution of the emerging DNP role from the existing advance practice models.

For more information on DNP programs go to: <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/DNP/DNPProgramList.htm>. Accessed September 28, 2006.

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2. American Association of Colleges of Nursing. “The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice”. AACN 2006. Available at <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/DNP/pdf/Essentials.pdf> .Accessed September 28, 2006.
3. AORN, “Perioperative advanced practice nurse competency statements” *Standards*,

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4. American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2004). *AACN position statement on the practice doctorate in nursing*. Washington, DC: AACN Available at: www.aacn.nche.edu/DNP/DNPPositionStatement.htm. Accessed July 9, 2006.

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Recommended Readings

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