

Advanced Practice Nurses: The AUBMC Experience

Mariam Kayle, RN, MSN, CCNS*

On behalf of the nurses at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) we would like to wish our nurse-colleagues at all the hospitals and health care institutions in Lebanon a *Happy Nurses' Day*.

AUBMC is a specialty medical center composed of 420 beds that is accredited by several international organizations. AUBMC is

1. an "Accredited Provider of Continuing Nursing Education by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation".
2. a provider of Life support Courses in affiliation with the American Heart Association
3. an accredited health care organization by the Joint Commission International

Furthermore, we have submitted our documents to the *Magnet Recognition Program®*, a program of the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) that recognize health care organizations that provide quality patient care, nursing excellence, and innovations in professional nursing practice. We had our site visit in April 2009, and we expect the results in June, 2009.

Why the Advanced Practice Nurse (APN) role at AUBMC?

In 2002, our Nursing Director, Ms Gladys Mouro, hired the first APN in Lebanon with a special vision for the role. Her goals for introducing this role at AUBMC are to improve the quality of patient care and to provide clinical resources to a younger generation of nurses.

What were the Challenges that we faced?

1. The lack of a model for the APN role in Lebanon
2. Ambiguity of the APN role for other health care providers in Lebanon
3. Lack of standard entry level to the APN role in Lebanon
4. Lack of regulations for the practice of APNs in Lebanon

How did this role develop at AUBMC?

In implementing the APN role at AUBMC, we followed the American model within the boundaries of the Lebanese law. The clinical nurse specialist role was chosen as the role for advanced nursing practice. To ensure competence of the APN, we required that our APNs are certified by a specialty organization. To

date, there are three APNs hired at AUBMC, one for critical care, one for pediatrics, and one for Surgery. These APNs are certified by the *American Association of Critical Care Nurses* and they report to the Nursing Director.

Basic entry requirements and continuing educational requirements were determined according to the criteria for certification by the *American Association of Critical care Nurses* and *American Nurses Credentialing Center*. A job description and a performance appraisal for the APN were developed based on the performance standards of the *American Nurses Association*.

Who is the APN at AUBMC?

"The APN is a change agent for a specific population through the integration of expert clinical practice in the patient care setting, education of staff and patients, provision of clinical leadership, presence as a clinical resource, and consultation to the health care team, and commitment to nursing research activities.

Dedicated to maintaining clinical standards, setting "best practice" of patient centered care, and promoting excellence, continuity and quality of patient care by supporting quality improvement activities, and collaborating with other health professionals" (AUBMC-APN job description).

The APN role at AUBMC has 5 main components:

1. **Expert Clinician:** provides advanced clinical decision making abilities and skills in the care of specific patient populations and patients with complex needs, in collaboration with other health care providers.
2. **Consultant:** provides consultation to nurses and other health care providers in the areas of expertise.
3. **Educator:** plans and implements educational activities for nurses, other health care providers, and patients and their families.
4. **Researcher:** promotes the utilization of the latest evidence in the delivery of care and conducts research.
5. **Leader:** provides leadership in initiatives and projects to improve quality of care at the organization.

The APN at any given time uses a more than one component of the role. She/he performs her/his duties within the code of ethics of the profession and in collaboration with other health care providers.

The APN functions within three spheres of influence: the patient and family, the nurse and other health care providers, and the organization.

What were the some of the outcomes of the APN role at AUBMC?

1. Establishment of a pioneer Life Support Center affiliated with the American Heart Association where basic and advanced life support courses are offered.
2. Establishment of the Shared governance structure at AUBMC, a framework that enables professional nursing staff and managers to contribute collectively to the decision-making process and to the control of the nursing practice at departmental and unit levels.
3. Participation in the establishment of the Abu Haidar Neuroscience Institute
4. Development and implementation of an Infant Abduction Plan for the medical center to prevent and to respond to an infant abduction on the medical center premises.
5. Establishment of Adult and Pediatric Code Teams to manage cardiopulmonary arrests in children and adults on the medical center's premises.
6. Pediatric Pain initiative to improve pain assessment and management of children
7. VAP initiative, to decrease the rates of ventilator associated pneumonias in adult patients
8. Hourly round initiative to decrease adult patient falls
9. Several initiatives to support and promote Evidence Based Practice (EBP) at the bedside by establishing specialty manuals, developing clinical protocols in collaboration with other health care providers, and establishing the EBP model. The EBP model, the third of its kind in the world, is a guide for the nurse to develop and answer clinical questions based on evidence.
10. Conducting research studies: currently the SUGAR study and the Shared Governance study are in process at AUBMC.
11. Submitting publications in international journals such as the journal of Transcultural Nursing and the European Journal of Palliative Care.

What is next for the APN role at AUBMC?

At the Nursing Services at AUBMC we are committed to the “...*recruitment and retention of expert resources ...*” (excerpt of the Nursing Services mission statement). One of our strategic goals is to “*develop and expand organization structure to support nursing initiatives and programs*”. It is our vision to expand the APN role to include an APN for very specialty service at the medical center. We have established an APN council which is responsible to coordinate the work of APNS at AUBMC and set a strategy to expand the role at the institution and the national level. A representative from the AUB school of Nursing and a representative from the order of nurses in Lebanon serve on the council, with the aim of bridging education, practice, and regulation of the APN role in Lebanon.

Acknowledgment

I would like to acknowledge Ms Gladys Mouro, Assistant Hospital Director for Patient Care, for supporting the APN role and for her inspirational leadership that motivates us at AUBMC to excel at what we do and to aspire for more...

* Mariam Kayle, RN, MSN, CCNS
Advanced Practice Nurse
Pediatric Acute and Critical Care
American University of Beirut Medical Center, Nursing Services