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Conference Abstract

Advanced nursing roles and Integrated Care: A pilot study in the Basque Country

Mario del Rio Camara, O+berri / Basque Foundation for Health Innovation, Spain

Roberto Nuño Solinis, O+berri / Basque Foundation for Health Innovation, Spain

Ana Chueca Ajuria, Basque Health Ministry, Spain

Galder Abos Mendizabal, O+berri / Basque Foundation for Health Innovation, Spain

María Ángeles Cidoncha Moreno, Basque Health Service, Spain

Rosa González Llinares, Basque Health Service, Spain

María Luz Peña González, Basque Health Service, Spain

Inmaculada Sánchez Martín, Basque Health Ministry, Spain

Elena de Lorenzo Urien, Faculty of Nursing Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain

Correspondence to: **Mario Del Rio Camara**, O+berri / Basque Foundation for Health Innovation, Spain, E-mail: mdelrio@bioef.org

Abstract

An increasingly aging population with multiple complex conditions along with budget constraints is putting pressure to several health systems across Europe [1], and the Basque Health Service/Osakidetza is not an exception. Developing new roles for nurses and/or advance nurse practitioners (ANPs) is sought to be a way to increase the efficiency and efficacy of the existing resources and improve health outcomes [2] [3]. Accordingly, the Basque Health Service has set the development of new competences for nurses as one of its key strategic priorities for the period 2013-2016 [4] and several pilot studies have been conducted between 2010 and 2012 [5]. Furthermore, a map with examples from other Regions of Spain and abroad was drafted in order to identify good practices and to adapt them to the Basque context [6].

Three new models of ANPs have been developed, all of which are targeted to people with complex comorbidities who have been previously stratified. First, Hospital Liaison ANPs help hospitalised patients with complex health and social conditions during admission&discharge by coordinating with the Continuity Manager (CM) ANP. In turn, CM ANPs are in charge of coordinating the Care Plan once the patient is in the community and serves as the link with other levels of health and social care. Thirdly, the Case manager ANP delivers advanced and intensive nursing home care

for a pool of no more than 50 patients with complex conditions. She works closely with both the primary care nurse and the ANP for continuity of care.

These new roles have the double aim to better integrate primary and secondary care on one hand and health and social services on the other hand following the Chronic Care model [7]. It should be noticed that this process falls under a wider framework that is currently being implemented in the Basque Country which consists in merging the structure of Primary Health Organizations with their Hospital of reference, creating Integrated Health Organizations (IHOs) [8] [9].

Regarding the analysis of the results, there has been some modest improvement in some dimensions of quality of life with high levels of patient and caregiver satisfaction. However, there has been no effect on hospital and A&E admissions, despite initial expectations. Each of the pilots was implemented differently and adapted to their local IHO creating variability within competences and results. Because of this, focus groups were conducted after the pilot in order to better define the competences that should be scaled up following the Strategic Action Plan of the Basque Health System/Osakidetza [4]. The groups identify some potential conflict with regards to how these new competences will be merged within the current system both at a clinical and educational level. Questions about how to train the new ANPs [10], their professional status regarding the rest of nurses and whether or not creating new jobs in times of economic constraint is feasible, involve a complex mix of stakeholders that will require further qualitative and quantitative research. However, these challenges will need to be answered if we want to provide better and more integrated care for our citizens.

Keywords

nursing; roles; integrated care; advanced nurse practitioner (anp)

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