

Professional Master's Degree: potential contribution to Advanced Practice Nursing

Mestrado profissional: potencial contribuição para a Enfermagem de Prática Avançada
Master profesional: contribución potencial a la Práctica de Enfermería Avanzada

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ABSTRACT

A reflection article about the contribution of Master's Degree Programs in Advanced Practice Nursing and the Universal Health Coverage and the Universal Health Access, topics that have been discussed by the Pan American Health Organization, and which the Brazilian Nursing requires not just appropriate, but further study to reflect in order to define directions for our profession.

Key words: Graduate Education in Nursing; Vocational Training; Universal Coverage.

RESUMO

Texto de reflexão acerca da contribuição dos Programas de Mestrado Profissional para a Enfermagem de Prática Avançada e a Cobertura Universal de Saúde e Acesso Universal à Saúde, temas que estão sendo discutidos pela Organização Pan-Americana de Saúde e dos quais a Enfermagem brasileira necessita não apenas se apropriar, mas aprofundar reflexões para definir os rumos para a nossa profissão.

Descritores: Educação de Pós-Graduação em Enfermagem; Formação Profissional; Cobertura Universal.

RESUMEN

Texto de reflexión sobre la contribución de los Programas de Maestría Profesional en Enfermería de Práctica Avanzada y la Cobertura Universal de Salud y Acceso Universal a la Salud, temas que están siendo discutidos por la Organización Panamericana de la Salud, y de los cuales la Enfermería brasileña necesita no apenas apropiarse, sino profundizar reflexiones para definir los rumbos para nuestra profesión.

Palabras clave: Educación de Post Grado en Enfermería; Formación Profesional; Cobertura Universal.

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Brazilian Nursing continually undergoes transformations, following government policies and the direction of internationally level of profession. This text was elaborated in order to reflect on the current discussion of the Advanced Practice Nursing, articulated by the goal of Universal Health Coverage and Universal Health Access, and the potential contribution of Professional Master's Degree Programs for this context.

Professional Master's Degrees (PM) were created in Brazil in the late 1990s, having as the main difference from academic master's degree the final product, that is, the intended result. In academic programs we intend to provide, by immersion in research, a long term training so that they may become researchers, who are usually incorporated into lecturing. In PM, also by immersion in research, the objective is to train a professional that, "in the professional world, outside academia, knows how to insert, recognize and identify, and, above all, uses research in order to add value to his or her activities, for personal or social interest"⁽¹⁾. In this sense, what is expected from a PM is that students' final projects may contribute to the integration of the professional in the scenario/field where he or she is attending the program. Thus, a contribution from the PM to the economic and social development, because

today's society requires more and more qualified training, even for industries that do not deal with teaching or with the cutting-edge research - so we have, and will have more and more demands for masters and PhDs 'outside and beyond the academy'⁽¹⁾.

The objectives of the PM, according to Decree 17 from December 2009, among others, include the "Training of personnel for advanced and transforming professional practice of applied procedures and processes, through the incorporation of the scientific method, qualifying the professional to work in technical-scientific and innovation activities"; training skilled professionals, through the appropriation and application of knowledge, based on methodological and scientific rigor; and the development and continuous updating of advances in science and technology for application in the management and development of applied research, as well as proposing innovations and technological improvements for specific problems⁽²⁾.

Guided by these objectives, Nursing PMs were created in the country in 2001, having its expansion from the year 2010. There are currently in operation 15 PM programs in the area that can and should contribute to the Advanced Practice Nursing in Brazil, since it is an applied science, thus, they need to create evidence for clinical practice through academic research, as well as create and revise technical, clinical and interactive processes, and tools that contribute to better organization and conduct of services and healthcare. And in this regard, PM occupies a privileged place in the set of productions.

Another potential contribution of Nursing PMs is related to the Universal Health Coverage and Universal Health Access, which highlights the need for human resources to promote more accessible, equitable and efficient health care. This is a current discussion in the health field, guided by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Pan American Health

Organization (PAHO), which, in resolutions and documents on human resources policy, express the need for improved access to health professionals trained in health systems based on primary health care (PHC). In this context, it highlights the Resolution CD 52.R13 in which PAHO/WHO urges Member States, as appropriate to their contexts and their priorities and public policies on PHC, to promote reforms in health professions education to support health systems based on the PHC strategy and increase vacancies for advanced practice nursing, among other professions⁽³⁾.

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) defines the advanced practice nurse as "a registered nurse who has acquired the expert knowledge base, complex decision-making skills and clinical competencies for expanded practice, the characteristics of which are shaped by the context and/or country in which s/he is credentialed to practice."⁽⁴⁾To this end, the ICN recommends Master's degree level training to integrate research, education, practice and management; allowing high degree of professional autonomy, independent practice and case management; developing advanced skills in health assessment, decision making and diagnostic reasoning; introducing recognized advanced clinical skills; providing consulting services to health care providers, insurances, implementation and evaluation of programs and first recognized reference for customers⁽⁴⁾.

The advanced practice nurse has social recognition in countries like United States and Canada, which have regulatory framework of well-established profession, which has not yet been consolidated in Brazil and in other Latin American countries, where there are no guidelines on educational training, practice and regulation of professional practice. Based on this scenario and the strategic importance of human resources in health to achieve the goal of Universal Health Coverage and Universal Health Access, PAHO has developed a work plan to support the expansion and professionalization of Advanced Practice Nursing, encouraging the search for a common identity among Latin American Nurses and the union of nursing culture to support the standardization of advanced practice nursing's role⁽⁵⁾.

Continuing, PAHO and the McMaster University - WHO Collaborating Centre for Primary Care Nursing and Human Resources in Health and the Canadian Center for Advanced Practice Nursing Research - organized an event focusing on the development of this professional, held in Hamilton - CA, on 16th and 17th of April 2015. At the event, there were presentations of experts and representatives of WHO and PAHO, experience reports (Canada, USA, Spain, the Caribbean and Chile) and discussion groups with participants from 16 countries, among which two from Brazil. The final document of the event is in preparation; among the results, the following priorities for optimizing the advanced practice nurse's role were established: to establish educational programs at master's degree level in Advanced Practice Nursing; to engage and influencing decision makers, legislators and other concerned parties/organizations; to emphasize the provision of Advanced Practice Nursing services for populations with high care needs, establishing a Pan-American collaborative network to develop and implement the advanced practice nursing role; and define and

optimize the complementary role of the registered nurse and advanced practice nurse in new primary healthcare models.

For these reasons, it is considered advisable that the PM has interface with the purposes of the Advanced Practice Nursing, contributing substantially to the profession and the new discussions about the Universal Health Access and Universal Health Coverage, especially when considering their goals related to application and incorporation of knowledge production and innovative technologies in order to transform reality and solution of practical problems.

However, the way PM are structured in Brazil, despite recent advances in the search for the identity of this professional training mode, differentiating them from the academic masters, most of them presents the broad designation of Nursing and its public aim target nurses inserted in diversified work practices. Such programs have recent production, in development, showing a gap in the generation of hard and innovative technologies, but with potential for advancement of professional practices that articulate the health sector and education⁽⁶⁾.

Thus some pertinent questions to the international scenario emerge for Advanced Practice Nursing and political strategy on human resources in health PAHO/WHO:

- Do the PM programs deliver what is proposed as advanced practice, where are nurses trained to decision making based on evidence?
- Have the programs helped equip nurses for advanced practice, that is, have the curriculum met the necessary skills to such training, sustaining the practice and also the production of knowledge and technology?
- Are there adjustments possibilities in the curriculum of some PM to also meet the scope of the Advanced Practice Nursing?

Believing in the PM also as an incentive to Advanced Practice Nursing in the country, it is considered that such issues should integrate the agenda of debates and reflections of existing PM and those recently approved by CAPES, so that it has a

clear picture of how each program has been tapering with this movement so that healthcare strategies are planned to these area guidelines.

It should also reflect on creative proposals for alternative training and the possibility of supplementing the nursing Residence courses with relevant subjects to *stricto sensu* professional training and final project in accordance with the current regulation, optional complementation for those interested in getting the professional master's degree in advanced practice in the area pertinent to receive clinical training (ex: Advanced Practice Nursing in Primary Health Care, etc.). CAPES, through the Public Notice No. 02/DAV/2009, shall encourage Professional Master's Programs associated with Residence programs in Health⁽⁷⁾, of which there are a significant number of residents nurses; so this is a space to be occupied by nursing that allows the improvement in professional training.

It is therefore urgent to expand the process of discussion on the scope of the Advanced Practice Nursing in accordance with the specificities of health context and Brazilian education as health priorities, people's needs, as well as training (skills and programs) and professional regulation. Thus, there is a need to agree on an agenda for discussion involving leaders and interested organizations such as the Brazilian Nursing Association, Federal Nursing Council, Ministry of Health, Coordination of Nursing Area in CAPES, Coordination of Nursing Advisory Committee on CNPq, researchers, academic and professional graduate programs, specialist societies, among others.

Given the above scenario, we consider that the PM is a viable alternative so that Nursing can meet demands, in the medium term, PAHO recommendations in relation to Advanced Practice Nursing and goal of Universal Health Coverage and Universal Health Access, in consistent with the policies set by the Ministry of Health as well as the very necessary discussions to the category, in order to define the direction of the profession.

In this attempt, we still have a way to go and challenges ahead, believing in our ability to contribute to the consolidation of the Unified Health System and expanding access and universal health coverage.

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