

Chapter 5

The Evolution and Impact of Emergency Nurse Practitioners: Empowering Emergency Care

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ABSTRACT

Emergency Nurse Practitioners (ENPs) are reshaping emergency care globally. This chapter charts their journey from inception to current practice across various countries. It describes how ENPs' roles have expanded beyond patient care to encompass leadership, education, and research. The impact is significant: ENPs improve care access, reduce wait times, and enhance patient satisfaction. Yet,

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challenges remain, including unclear role boundaries and regulatory hurdles. The chapter explores future possibilities for ENPs in areas like crisis management and healthcare technology. To fully leverage ENPs' potential, ongoing efforts are needed in standardizing education, clarifying regulations, and fostering professional acceptance. As healthcare demands evolve, ENPs are set to play an increasingly crucial role in delivering efficient, high-quality emergency care.

INTRODUCTION

Emergency departments, the true beating hearts of hospitals, face unprecedented challenges in contemporary health systems. Population growth, aging demographics, increasing prevalence of chronic diseases, and declining medical demographics are putting constant pressure on these vital services.(Considine et al., 2012a). In this context, nurses, pillars of emergency operations, are called upon to broaden their field of expertise and strengthen their skills to guarantee safe and quality care.

The emergence of Emergency Nurse Practitioners (ENPs) represents an innovative response to these challenges. This new professional profile, located at the interface between doctors and nurses, but with its own identity, emerged in the United States in the 1960s (Snyder et al., 2006a). Other countries, such as Canada in the 1970s and the United Kingdom in the early 1980s, quickly followed this path, recognizing the potential of ENPs to improve the efficiency and quality of emergency care (Sheer & Wong, 2008).

The evolution of the role of ENPs has been motivated by various socio-political, economic and professional factors, with the constant need to compensate for the lack of doctors and improve access to care (Jennings et al., 2008). Over time, the scope of practice of ENPs has expanded considerably, encompassing advanced skills in clinical assessment, diagnosis, and case management, thereby allowing optimal use of human resources in emergency departments (Kerr & Macaskill, 2020).

ENPs education has played an essential role in this evolution. Training programs, generally at master's level, have been developed to provide nurses with the theoretical and practical knowledge necessary to perform these advanced roles (Wilbeck et al., 2018). These courses cover areas such as advanced patient assessment, pharmacology, pathophysiology, and clinical decision making, while emphasizing the specifics of emergency care (Evans et al., 2015a).

Ann Hamric has defined seven essential competencies for advanced practice nurses, focusing on clinical practice but also incorporating aspects of research, consultation, evidence-based practice, education, leadership and decision-making ethics (A. Hamric, 1989). This holistic approach promoted the autonomy of ENPs

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