Abstract

"There exists a fleeting and deliciously exciting moment in the life of an idea when it teeters between what one person suspects, and what everyone accepts. In that moment, months or years before it exerts any practical influence, the idea holds the greatest potential to inspire and evolve. Opportunities, implications, and related discoveries open up from it in all directions like a hall of mirrors."

- D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson

Doctorate of Nursing Practice

What's All The Fuss About?

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History & Evolution of the Practice

Doctorates in Nursing in the USA

- 1960 - Boston University opens 1st Adult Doctorate
- 1971 - Otterbein University opens DNS program
- 1999 - UT-HSC opens DNS practice Doctorate
- 2001 - University of Kentucky opens First DNP Program
- 2002 - AANCA Survey Task Force on the Practice Doctorate
- 2003 - Columbia University admits students
- 2004 - AANCA approves DNP Program Statement & 2015 target implementation date

There are 47 DNP programs are currently enrolling students nationwide, more than 140 additional DNP programs are under development at U.S. nursing schools.

The DNP is designed for nurses seeking a terminal degree in nursing practice and offers an alternative to research-focused doctoral programs. DNP-prepared nurses will be well-equipped to fully implement the science developed by nurse researchers prepared in PhD, DNP, and other research-focused nursing doctorates.

Curriculum

DNP curricula focus on current master's programs by providing education in evidence-based practice, quality improvement, and systems thinking among other key areas.

"The DNP, like practice doctorates in other disciplines, builds on science generated by research, translates it into practice, and provides feedback, thereby putting the theory-research-practice feedback loop that has been advocated for years into action."

- Nordasen et al. 2016

Individuals with practice doctorates are the most highly educated and qualified practitioners in their fields. Instead of focusing primarily on research and teaching, like those with Ph.D.'s within their fields, those with practice doctorates use their education and expertise in leadership roles on the front lines of their profession.

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Practice Doctorate

The term "practice" specifically refers to a form of nursing intervention that influences health care outcomes for individuals or populations. Preparation at this practice doctorate level includes advanced preparation in nursing, based on nursing science, and is at the highest level of nursing practice.

The DNP is similar in concept to practice doctorates in other professions such as medicine (M.D.), law (J.D.) and dentistry (D.D.M.). DNP-prepared nurses are equipped for leadership roles in nursing practice, business, administration, clinical research, and academia.

The DNP & APNs

The practice doctorate will be the graduate degree for advanced nursing practice preparation, including but not limited to the four current APN roles: clinical nurse specialist, nurse anesthetist, nurse midwife and nurse practitioner.

Educational Leadership Track

The Educational Leadership concentration prepares doctoral-level nursing educators for clinical and academic settings.

Clinical Leadership Track

The Clinical Leadership concentration prepares doctoral-level clinicians or practitioners and includes core courses in research and health policy focused on organizational behavior, information management, and management in advanced practice.

Professional Versus Academic Degrees

"The distinction between the professional and academic degrees in nursing is not one of rigor, but rather one that relates to the locus of study and subsequent scientific enterprise. The nursing discipline of nursing, like other health science disciplines, needs both research-scientists and practitioner-scientists."

How Does the DNP Differ from other Practice Doctorates?

The DNP is not an entry-level degree. Typically, licensure would occur prior to entering the DNP program. Terminal degree in nursing represents the highest level of practice in the discipline.

Will the creation of DNP programs detract from nursing research?

DNP's will serve as the natural allies of researchers for the full implementation of evidence for practice. Discipline needs both researchers and high level clinicians to advance the profession and provide high quality care.

Why DNP? Perceived Benefits

Development of needed enhanced competencies for increasingly complex clinical and leadership roles; global health care; genomics, biotechnological advances; better match of program requirements and credentials with credential earned; terminal degree and advanced educational credential for those who do not need/desire a research-focussed degree.
**Perceived Benefits**
- Patient with other health professions
- Improved image of nursing
- Enhanced knowledge to improve practice
- Enhanced leadership skills to strengthen practice and health care delivery
- Increased number of faculty for clinical instruction
- Improved patient care outcomes

**Will the DNP disenfranchise APNs?**
- There is no intention to disenfranchise any practicing APNs

**Will faculty with DNP be eligible for tenure?**

**Tenure is an institutional prerogative with two major considerations**
- If the institution tenures holders of other professional degrees (e.g., MD, PhD, J.D., PT, ADN, DO) then DNP graduates should also be tenurable.
- If the institution defines scholarly productivity broadly to include external funding and publications rather than that associated with only scholarly grants, then the DNP graduate should be tenurable.

**Frequently Expressed Fears**
- DNP Program enrollment will decline
- There is no evidence for this. Those who select the DNP appear to be from a population that is not attracted to a PhD and probably would not choose a doctoral study without the emergence of the practice doctorate.

**The Mission Becomes Apparent**
- "Nurses prepared at the doctoral level with a blend of clinical, organizational, economic, and leadership skills are most likely to be able to improve nursing and other clinical outcomes, find positions of leadership, and implement educational programs of care delivery that are broadly acceptable, economically feasible, and which significantly impact health care outcomes."

**Despite the increase in professional nursing faculties in other countries, Canada does not currently have a DNP program.**

**The position of the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) is that CASN does not, at this time, support the concept of the professional practice doctorate (CASN, 2008).**