The AOD Nurse Practitioner Project
PROJECT UPDATE, MARCH 2004

The AOD Nurse Practitioner Project is an initiative of a consortium comprising DANA, DASC, Flinders University School of Nursing and Midwifery (FUSNM), NCETA and APSAD. The broad aim of the project is to inform a national approach for the Alcohol and Other Drug Nurse Practitioner (NP) role. A key task of the project was to inform the development of nationally accepted standards for AOD Nurse Practitioners. However, in order to facilitate standards development, key research activities needed to be undertaken.

Survey
The first research component of the project was to survey nurses and other health professionals who have a clinical role in responding to AOD issues. A survey suitable for hand and electronic completion was developed and distributed through informal nursing networks, DANA and APSAD membership lists and DASC clinical services (with permission), and placed on the DANA website. The survey commenced early November 2003, and data collection ceased just prior to Christmas 2003. Information about the project and an invitation to participate was also placed on the popular listserv UPDATE.

Preliminary analysis
The results have undergone preliminary analysis at this stage. Overall, 107 people completed a valid survey, including 57 nurses (56 Registered and 1 Enrolled nurse), 21 medical staff, 11 social workers and 7 psychologists. The survey respondents were predominantly female (65%) and were a median age of 46 years (range 25-89 years).

Need and support of NP role
The survey sought information from nurses and health professionals about perception of need for the NP role in their service, and sought information about the level of support and planning that had occurred in preparation for the role. Forty eight per cent of participants (n=51) (26 nurses and 25 non-nurses) stated that their service had identified a role for a NP in their service. Eighty four percent of participants (n=90) (53 nurses and 37 non-nurses) stated that they personally perceived a need for, and supported the NP role in their service.

NP Role development
Nurses were invited to identify critical tasks that differentiated the role of the novice and advanced practice nurse, and identify those expected of an AOD Nurse Practitioner. Nurses were also invited to identify their perception of proficiency on various tasks (generic and AOD-specific), and to identify whether they intended undertaking preparation for the NP role. Nurses also completed a self-report assessment of their own skills, and were invited to identify whether training or organizational factors would enhance their performance on various workplace and AOD-related tasks or interventions. The survey also elicited information regarding experienced nurses’ intention to prepare for the AOD NP role.

The sub-group of nursing participants were mostly Level 1 RNs (41%), mostly female (86%), and of a median age of 46 years. Although all Australian jurisdictions and NZ were represented, most were from NSW (35%), SA (26%) or QLD (14%). Sixty eight per cent of the nurses (n=38) worked for AOD specialist organizations (including private organizations) and others worked in corrections, hospital, academic (6% each), or other health services.

Responses to the survey are currently undergoing analysis prior to their further distribution among Steering Committee and Reference Group members, and prior to the preparation of the information for reports and public presentations. Keep posted on the DANA website at www.danaonline.org for further information, or contact the project officer directly. The research component was supported by an NCETA Post-Graduate Workforce Development Grant. Congratulations to the successful recipients of the prize draws: Bronte Thomson (APSAD registration), Dr’s Rene Pols and Michael Bolton (book vouchers).

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