ADVANCED NURSE PRACTITIONERS IN ACUTE DIABETES CARE IN IRELAND: IMPACT, INTEGRATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

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Background: Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP) is a protected and regulated title in Ireland with nurses having to meet stringent criteria to be entered onto the national nursing and midwifery register to hold such a position. ANPs are increasingly important in diabetes care. Understanding stakeholder perceptions of the ANP role is essential to inform future workforce planning, service development, and sustainability.

Aim: To explore stakeholder understanding of the ANP role in diabetes services and examine perceptions of its impact, integration, and sustainability within specialist healthcare settings.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey was conducted among healthcare professionals and stakeholders involved in diabetes services. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while free-text responses were analysed thematically to identify key themes relating to implementation, impact, and sustainability of ANP roles.

Results: Fifty-nine healthcare professionals, including consultants, specialist nurses, dietitians, and podiatrists, completed the survey. Respondents particularly associated the ANP role with prescribing (94.9%,n=56), autonomous clinical decision-making (91.5%,n=54), and advanced assessment and diagnosis (81.4%,n=48) with a focus those with Type 1 diabetes (73.6%,n=39), diabetes technology (62.3%,n=33), young adult diabetes care (58.5%,n=31), and complex Type 2 diabetes management (56.6%,n=30). Respondents considered the key stakeholders for implementation of ANP posts were Consultant endocrinologists (94.9%) and Directors of Nursing (79.7%). While successful integration was perceived to require consultant support, nursing leadership, multidisciplinary collaboration, administrative resources, and clear governance structures.

Respondents reported that ANPs improved access to specialist diabetes care through reduced waiting times, increased service capacity, and enhanced access to diabetes technologies. Additional benefits included improved patient-centred care, continuity-of-care, clinical outcomes, service innovation, and workforce development. Sustainability was perceived to depend on demonstrable clinical impact, organisational and leadership support, quality improvement, education, research, and alignment with national policy priorities.

Conclusion: ANPs making a substantial contribution to specialist diabetes services through improvements in access, quality of care, service efficiency, and patient outcomes. The findings highlight the importance of strong clinical and organisational support structures, ongoing evaluation of outcomes, and investment in leadership, research, and workforce development to ensure the successful integration and sustainability of ANP roles within diabetes services.