

On the cutting edge of nursing education: Ontario Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner Programme

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Abstract/executive summary

The Ontario Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner Programme is one of the world's largest university consortium, in terms of membership, to offer advanced practice nursing education. In 1995 ten universities in Ontario, Canada, came together to officially create the consortium identified as the Ontario Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner Programme, under the auspices of the Council of Ontario University Programs in Nursing (COUPN). The programme is offered in English and French at the baccalaureate level. The aim of adopting the consortium model was to increase cohesion, access, economy of effort, and standardization of primary health care nurse practitioner education. University autonomy, regional and language needs are all respected within this model. The structure of the programme is made up of COUPN deans and directors, four regional coordinators, ten university specific faculty liaisons, course professors, tutors/instructors, and clinical preceptors. This relatively new programme is unique and innovative for several reasons including, its large consortium structure; its utilization of technology (including hybrid software for on-line teaching) for course delivery; and its curricular focus on primary health care leading to the development of nurse practitioners across the province of Ontario. Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioners are Registered Nurses (RNs) with advanced knowledge and skills to diagnose and manage common conditions across the life span. In some areas of the world, Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioners are also known as Family Nurse Practitioners. The Ontario Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner programme structure and function serves as a model to other institutions of higher education while its graduates manifest the essence of advanced nursing practice within Canada.