Biography

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My nursing career has been centred predominantly within neurosurgery and critical care, before moving into advanced practice roles. Early on in my career I undertook a post registration pain management course out of interest for the speciality and to further my knowledge. The course reinforced my enthusiasm in this specialist area. My initial specialist role was lead nurse for the pain neuromodulation service in Oxford, a role which enabled me to combine all my nursing expertise and skills whilst developing the service. At this time, I embarked upon my advanced clinical practice (ACP) journey. I undertook the non-medical prescribing course in 2015, and since then have been a strong advocate for the development of nurse prescribing within services in the organisation. After 13 years in pain neuromodulation, I moved on to set up the ACP role in spinal neurosurgery. My current role as Lead Nurse for pain services enables me to practice as an independent nurse prescriber in both inpatient and outpatient settings*.* In addition, I am a designated prescribing practitioner whereby I undertake the role of practice assessor for students undertaking the non-medical prescribing course, as well as the advanced clinical practice MSc.

Abstract

Nurse prescribing as part of the inpatient pain service is a complex role, requiring an extensive skill set around multiple clinical specialities in the inpatient settings. The role requires the practitioner to continually update knowledge and skills not only in pain management, but across all specialties. An inpatient pain service benefits from an experienced multidisciplinary team, with a broad background of experience. The ever-changing landscape of pain management with issues for example around opioid dependency, use of multimodal analgesia, our growing elderly population and increased patient expectation makes for a particularly challenging, but often, rewarding role. More recently COVID-19 has brought its own challenges to the delivery of inpatient pain services. Service delivery has been affected, and fear of the unknown when managing pain in patients with the virus challenged existing practices. Moving forward, the impact of long COVID is likely to be seen in the chronic pain clinic, as well as in the form of patients with acute on chronic pain in the inpatient settings.

With the progression of nursing into advanced practice roles, nurse prescribing is becoming a more sought-after skill within such teams to provide ‘the complete package’ of care to patients with pain. Advanced assessment skills which then progress to prescribing (both pharmacological and non-pharmacological) provides the patient with a plan of care based on expert clinical judgement. Access to this level of highly specialised expertise has been demonstrated to improve patient experience and outcomes, decrease length of stay and reduce morbidity and mortality 1. There are however many challenges faced when attempting to deliver a robust inpatient pain service. As a ‘support’ or ‘advisory’ service the inpatient pain team are often on the periphery of the ‘home team.’ Excellent quality prescribing in line with the UK national competency framework 2 to ensure quality and continuity of care can be challenging.

With advanced clinical practice roles being actively encouraged by Health Education England 3, and now incorporated into many services, leaders have a duty to ensure that support and ongoing continuous professional development is available to ensure competency is maintained. In addition, further research should be encouraged examining the challenges, efficacy, and economic value of advanced clinical practice roles, to support the ongoing development of inpatient pain services as supported by the Royal College of Anaesthetists 4.

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2. Health Education England (2017) Advanced Practice. [www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/advanced-clinical-practice](http://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/advanced-clinical-practice) Accessed online 11.02.2021
3. Royal Pharmaceutical Society (2016) A Competency Framework for all Prescribers. [www.rpharms.com](http://www.rpharms.com) Accessed online 11.02.2021