

Advanced Nurse Practitioners Actualising, Adopting, Integrating and Championing Digital Transformation- a Case Study

Ms. Tracey Dermody, RANP,RPHN,RNP,RGN, Post Graduate Research Support Officer, South East Technological University, Cork Rd., Waterford. tracey.dermody@setu.ie
 Ms. Louise Skerritt, RANP, RPHN, RNP, RGN, Assistant Director of Public Health Nursing Service Wicklow, CHEast. louse.skerritt@hse.ie

Acknowledging the importance and relevance of the six core competencies of Advanced Nursing Practice, we propose a further skillset which is fundamental to the adoption of digital health in clinical practice by ANP's.



Background

- In their digital health capability framework the Office of the Nursing and Midwifery Services Director¹ outlined the vital role that nurses and midwives will play in advocating, planning and implementing digital health. Similarly, the Department of Health Report of the Expert Body on Nursing and Midwifery² identify that nurses and midwives are among the crucial elements in the understanding, development and demonstration of digital technology in clinical practice.
- Advanced Nurse Practitioners can lead by using their unique strategic operational position to actualise, adopt, integrate, champion and drive digital technologies in clinical practice.
- Wynn³ purports digital technologies can be utilised in several ways such as capturing digital data to improve health research, joining up provision between services and improving patients' self-management of conditions to influence health outcomes.
- Paradoxically, despite the noted advantages and recent impetus of digital technology in clinical practice, the actualising, implementation and integration remains stagnant.

Purpose

To discuss the lived experience of two Advanced Nurse Practitioners in driving digital transformation in healthcare and map an evolving skillset.

Introduction: There are six core competencies of Advanced Nursing Practice in Ireland⁴; Professional Values and Conduct, Management and Team Competence, Clinical-Decision Making, Knowledge and Cognitive Competence, Communication and Interpersonal Competence and Leadership and Professional Scholarship. Lockwood⁵ describes four themes in relation to ANP clinical autonomy- “stepping up”, “living it”, “bounce-back ability” and “setting in motion”, we have used these themes to guide our discussion and reflection.

Stepping Up: “As ANP’s we identified a clinical problem through our individual and collective community wound prevalence data and audit. We recognised that employing a streamlined, standardised, consistent approach to wound assessment, documentation and care pathways using a digital solution could reduce variation in clinical practice, provide appropriate access and referral to the right service for patients at the right time. In the process of “stepping up” using our core competencies of clinical-decision making, professional values, communication, interpersonal and leadership we were able to bring our idea from inception through to project execution and evaluation. Our core competencies assisted the design, development planning, operational preparedness and implementation of the initiative”.

Living It: “As clinical experts in Community Wound Care we identified: there were poor referral structures in place, a lack of continuity of wound care and huge variation in wound care knowledge and practice amongst our staff cohorts. These deficiencies in clinical practice impacted our ability to provide an equitable, patient centric service to our patient cohort. As ANP’s working within Public Health Nursing Services we were fortunate to have a unique position within our nursing structure, in that we could bring the challenges and potential solutions to key stakeholders at both a local and national level”.

Bounce-back ability: “Central to the design, development, implementation and evaluation of this project was our bounce-back ability, which was challenged at many stages during the proof of concept from structural and organisational challenges to a Global pandemic and finally an organisational wide cyber – attack. It was our bounce-back ability that drove and motivated both of us through the challenging times and it kept us focused on delivering a patient –centric solution to our problem. It is this bounce-back ability that stopped us from giving in and letting go of the project at many time points in the process. We believe that it was our passion, perseverance and the importance of patient centredness in our clinical practice that kept us determined to see the project to completion”.

Setting in motion: “On reflection, we are able to recognise that this proof of concept has laid a foundation for future digital health initiatives and the wider adoption of digital health within nursing and midwifery care across health care settings in Ireland. We acknowledge both the importance and relevance of the six core competencies of Advanced Nursing Practice in this project but we propose that based on our experience and learning that fundamental to the adoption of digital health in clinical practice ANP’s it is imperative that they develop a further skillset which is illustrated above.

Conclusions
 There is limited reference to the academic preparation required within the current ANP education programme⁴. To prepare candidates to actualise, adopt, integrate, champion and drive digital health in clinical practice we propose the integration of the identified digital health skillset as competencies in post-graduate advanced nurse practice education curriculum.