General practice nurses’ role in child health and development: a pilot study

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BACKGROUND

- 2001 Nurse in Genera Practice [NiGP] initiative for rural areas to assist in chronic disease management
- 2004 NiGP extended to metropolitan areas.
- 2008 < 8,000 general practice nurses in Australia
- General practice nurses’ roles vary according to patient demographics
- 2004 MBS number for general practice nurses to immunise
- 2008 MBS number for 4 year old child developmental check

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, DESIGN & RECRUITMENT

- Do general practice nurses (GPN) have a role in well child care?
- If so what is that role?
- Do GPNs feel prepared for this role?

An exploratory, cross-sectional, postal survey.

All GPNs working in a provincial Queensland Health Service District, approximately 220, were posted a survey and reply paid envelope.

INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

- Literature reports of GPNs involvement in child health education
- Previous research with child health & school based youth health nurses
- Face and content validity evaluated
- Constructs explored:
  - demographics, e.g., nursing qualifications,
  - paediatric and or child health experience;
  - length of employment as a practice nurse;
  - child health issues currently addressed by practice nurses
  - child health and parenting education currently conducted

SAMPLE

N = 29 [13.2% response rate]

Female 96.6%
Registered nurses 96.6%
Age in years 47.2 ± 0.6
Years as a registered nurse 23.7 ± 9.0
Years in general practice 6.7 ± 6.9

Nursing background
- General hospital 22.0%
- General practice 17.8%
- Paediatric/Child health 11.1%
- Midwifery 11.1%
- Aged care 11.1%
- Specialist areas 17.8%
- Community 8.9%

Highest level of nursing education
- Tertiary education 85.7%
- Diploma/Degree 42.9%
- Graduate Certificate 32.1%
- Masters 7.1%
- Post-registration certificate 3.6%
- General hospital 14.3%
- Postgraduate certificate in GPN 24.1%

FINDINGS

In relation to child health and development role 72% GPNs had undertaken courses related to child health and development in:
- Immunisation 56.2%
- Child health and/or maternity 28.1%

GPN reported
- Interest in increasing their child heath and development role 82%
- Learning more about child health and development 82%
- Contemplating undertaking child heath and development courses 38%

Roles in child health and development – previous week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Per week</th>
<th>Mean per person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immunisation</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child health checks</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General advice/care</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fever management</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthma care</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeding problems</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settling/sleeping problems</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nil (2 participants)</td>
<td>2.2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Professional development needed for extended role 87%

- Child health and childhood illnesses 86.7%
- Advice for mothers 60.0%
- Antenatal care 20.0%
- Nutrition/lifestyle choices 13.3%
- School aged children & adolescents 13.3%
- Behavioural problems 13.3%

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

- GPN come from varied backgrounds
- GPN address many and varied child health and development issues
- Most GPN felt they needed additional education to assist them in caring for children and advising parents about child health and development issues.
- Education does not always precede new practice expectations.
- Education/professional development needed in many areas of child health and development
- Need for a national study of GPN needs re child health and development and development of appropriate educational materials
- Online National study to be undertaken early 2010