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Mary Ryder  
*Edith Cowan University*

Elisabeth Jacob  
*Edith Cowan University*

Joyce Hendricks  
*Edith Cowan University*

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Nurse Practitioner views on leadership and research
Mary Ryder1,2,3; Elisabeth Jacob2; Joyce Hendricks3,4

1. University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland. 2. Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, Western Australia. 3. St. Vincent’s University Hospital, Dublin Ireland. 4. Central Queensland University, Queensland, Australia.

Aims: To explore the ways in which Irish and Australian Nurse Practitioners (NP) implement leadership and research in their roles.

Design: A qualitative inductive research methodology, using interpretative descriptive approach.

Methods: Inductive methodology was used to bring meaning to the phenomena through the subjective views of participants. Semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data analysis used Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis method.

Background: The original concept of the NP role was to expand nursing practice in order to provide high quality, accessible healthcare to patients. This placed NPs at the crux of changes to healthcare delivery. Implementing these changes requires leadership. Research demonstrates the effects of these changes to healthcare delivery and contributes to healthcare knowledge from the nursing profession.

Results: 10 participants, 5 NPs each from Ireland and Australia were interviewed. Four themes emerged from the analysis:

1. Innovative Leadership
   Leadership activities
   Capabilities at adapting skills and experience to change services and effect changes to models of healthcare delivery
   The work of NPs
   Clinical focus that is independent and autonomous “I have total autonomy, I see my own patients, I make my own diagnosis, I prescribe my own medication” (AUS 4)
   Trailblazers
   Developed a role that was uniquely different from traditional nursing and medical roles. Required to break the traditional mould for nurses to follow in their wake.

2. Optimism
   Pride
   Continued innovation

3. Research
   Research Leadership: “I don’t think we’re there yet” (AUS 1)
   Research Challenges: “The fear of actually starting,” (IRL 5)
   NP research role: “It comes hand in hand that you will be doing research it’s not all about hands on patient care” (AUS 1)

4. Resilience
   Overcome resistance
   “Nurses have a reputation for eating their own young” (AUS 4)
   “In some cases they can be seen as a troublemaker, seen as pushing the boundaries” (IRL 3)
   “Once they got to know me and know what I actually did, then that very much changed” (IRL 4)
   “We don’t fit into typical management structures” (AUS 4)
   Isolation
   “I think initially coming off the floor and that you are, you haven’t got that comradeship” (IRL 2)
   “Professionally very isolating” (AUS 1)
   Seek positive support
   Seeking constructive support from medical and nursing colleagues
   “I suppose it makes us feel better talking when we get together and network, you realise you are not alone...the NP role can be quiet an isolated role” (AUS 1)

Conclusion: NPs are clinical leaders focused on improving healthcare delivery for patient populations. The NP role is misunderstood. NPs lack confidence to be independently research active. Research by NPs requires support from nurses in academia. The NP role is similar in Ireland and Australia.