

Nurse Practitioners Coming of age

“WAITING OVER -- THE NURSE WILL SEE YOU NOW!:

The headline which greeted the opening of the first private nurse practitioner led clinic situated in Brisbane said it all.

Nurse practitioners have waited so long for the recognition they deserve and which they have earned. These highly qualified and skilled clinicians throughout Australia are key to many of our healthcare services to the disadvantaged, the poor, the indigenous and the chronically ill . Those who would otherwise fall through the cracks of our system.

Of course there are many nurse practitioner also working in the more traditional and medically dominated areas of healthcare and they are key to services being delivered with an eye on the patient and family being the centre of care.

‘Coming of Age’ is therefore a slogan for a role which has come into its own and this is the slogan for the Australian College of Nurse Practitioner’s (ACNP) conference to be held in Adelaide from the 5th -8th October 2011.

A major breakthrough for this group of health professionals has been the new 2010 laws which grants eligible nurse practitioners and midwives access to specific items in the Medicare and Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule. While many cannot access such items because of the restrictions placed on their practices, the law itself is a landmark recognition of their worth and their under-utilisation within our present system which is crying out for such clinical wisdom.

The lead nurse practitioner of the Brisbane clinic , Julie Farrelly who is also a midwife, will be presenting at the conference this week. Julie has 30 years of experience and graduate studies having worked with the Flying Doctor service in country hospitals and in Emergency departments. How many other health professionals can bring such a wealth of experience to their clinical practice along with all the years of study this entails?

But Julie represents the tip of an iceberg of untapped potential – a generation of highly skilled nurse clinicians some with 20 years of graduate studies along with years of experience working with individuals and populations with complex and chronic conditions. We need everyone of them today !

ACNP is the national peak organisation for nurse practitioners advancing nursing practice and access to health care.

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