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## The development of Advanced Clinical Practice in the UK

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The evolution of advanced clinical practice roles within the UK began in the 1980's (Leary & MacLaine, 2019) and has continued to develop in various forms internationally since. The NHS Long-Term Plan (2019) has been the most recent key driver for advanced clinical practice within England, along with a multi-professional framework that outlines the capabilities expected of practitioners working at advanced level across the four key pillars of clinical practice, leadership and management, education and research (NHS, 2017). Both documents acknowledge that Advanced Clinical Practitioners (ACPs) are central to transforming service delivery to meet dynamic local healthcare needs (NHS, 2017; 2019), and as such there has been a large investment in the training and development of said roles.

Increasing life-expectancy, complexity and disease burden and The European Working Time Directive and a subsequent shortage of medical personnel have often been cited as drivers for the implementation of advanced practice roles (Boulanger, 2008; Evans et al, 2020; Torrens et al, 2020). However, caution is advised when rationalising their introduction and development to that of the medical substitution paradigm, advanced practice roles complement existing medical models and are not designed to replace them. There has been great diversity and as such controversy surrounding advanced practice roles over the decades since their inception. Nevertheless, a colossal effort from professional bodies such as Health Education England, Council of Deans of Health, Association of Advanced Practice Educators (AAPE UK) and Royal Colleges has seen a huge investment in workforce development in this area of service delivery, in order to meet patients' needs of the future. Development in this area has also included the introduction of a multi-professional definition of advanced clinical practice, the first of its kind:

*“Advanced clinical practice is delivered by experienced, registered health and care practitioners. It is a level of practice characterised by a high degree of autonomy and complex decision making. This is underpinned by a master's level award or equivalent that encompasses the four pillars of clinical practice, leadership and management, education and research, with demonstration of core capabilities and area specific clinical competence.” (HEE, 2017)*

The definition aims to provide clarity for employers, service leads, education providers, healthcare professionals and ACPs themselves (HEE, 2017).

Prior to the release of the NHS Long-Term Plan, the Council of Deans of Health (CoDoH) were commissioned by Health Education England (HEE), as part of the development and implementation of the Multi-professional framework for advanced clinical practice in England (HEE, 2017), to revolutionise the interface between HEE and universities. Since the seminal CoDoE (2018) report and in line with the Five year Forward View (NHSE, 2014; 2017), there have been several important developments for the advanced clinical practice arena. As a result of significant investment and infrastructure multiple initiatives are either well-established, or underway, including;

- ACP level 7 apprenticeships - incorporate skills development, technical knowledge and practical experience through a work-based training programme (NHS Employers, 2020)
- HEE accreditation of ACP university training programmes
- Guidance for the supervision of ACPs (HEE, 2020)
- Launch of a Centre for Advancing Practice to support education and training for advanced practitioners
- Development and adoption of national specialist standards in to university training programmes

- Development of core capability and credentialing frameworks for advanced clinical practitioner roles – several credentialing schemes already exist such as the Faculty of Intensive Care (FICM, 2015) for Advanced Critical Care Practitioners (ACCPs) and the Royal College of Emergency Medicine (RCEM, 2020) for Emergency Care ACPs (EC ACPs).

### Advancing the Advanced Clinical Practitioner

A recent scoping review by Evans *et al* (2020<sup>1</sup>) sought to support the multiple initiatives listed above to promote a consistent approach to ACP workforce development. The findings of this work will provide key stakeholders and ACPs with vital information to shape the way in which we deliver, develop and diversify these important roles. Initial data from the reviews suggests that, where data exists, the provision of ACP-led care is safe and effective and has a positive impact upon patient care and experience and service efficiency and capacity. However, the review has highlighted that a lack of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities and unclear career pathways exist (Evans *et al*, 2020<sup>2</sup>). A recent national evaluation of the ACCP role has also highlighted these issues (Diamond-Fox *et al*, 2020) and as such a new academic network has recently been launched – Advanced Critical/Clinical Care Practitioners Academic Network (ACCPAN). The aim of this new, all-inclusive, network is to support ACCPs & ACPs, both qualified and in training. ACCPAN aims to promote collaborative working in a safe and supportive environment, to ensure high quality education, mentorship, networking and research opportunities for its members (Fig.1). The launch of a national service evaluation as a scoping exercise will soon be distributed to multi-disciplinary members currently working in a role which concerns advanced clinical practice (clinician, educator, researcher, strategic or leadership role.). The evaluation will be based upon a modification of validated tools used to assess training needs analysis and the data gathered will be used to inform the production of a rolling annual timetable of CPD events that align to the networks aims (Fig.1.). Advanced Practitioners and Advanced Practice Educators from all multi-professional fields are welcomed and encouraged to join and contribute to the networks activities.

In conclusion, exciting times lie ahead for the development of new advanced clinical practitioner (ACP) roles and the expansion of existing ACP posts within the NHS. We still have a way to go when considering the long-term workforce development support for these group of clinicians, that by nature of the career path in which they have chosen, are inherently driven to progress. The launch of the Centre for Advancing Practice will no doubt prove to be the hub for such activity, but there are also smaller networks that can provide support for both clinicians and educators.

Figure 1. Advanced Critical/Clinical Care Practitioners Academic Network (ACCPAN) aims

NETWORK AIM	ACTIVITIES
1. To provide educational opportunities and CPD activities that map to national curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education webinars</li> <li>• Interactive case studies &amp; expanded case summary discussions</li> <li>• Interactive webinars</li> <li>• Simulation &amp; virtual-reality training days</li> <li>• Expert guest speakers</li> <li>• Online masterclasses mapped across the four pillars of advanced practice</li> </ul>
2. To provide opportunity to contribute to and engage in national research activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online journal club</li> <li>• Original research collaborations</li> <li>• MSc Dissertation supervision</li> <li>• Service improvement projects</li> <li>• Publication support</li> <li>• National platform for research dissemination</li> </ul>
3. To provide peer support and mentorship across all specialities through shared learning and experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical portfolio development</li> <li>• Preparing for apprenticeship end-point assessments</li> <li>• Debriefing opportunities</li> <li>• Safe environment for reflection</li> </ul>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opportunities to network through 'buddying' system</li><li>• Wellbeing support</li></ul> |
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