

Alan Myles

International Leader in Nurse Practitioner Education

Bio: Career Milestones.

RAF (1962 – 1982)

- Nurse training
- Nurse Teacher training (RCN)
- Head of School of Nursing, RAF Halton

RCN (1982 – 2004)

- Lecturer then Principal Lecturer in Nursing Education
- Vice Principal
- Acting Director of RCN Institute

Contribution to NP Movement during Principal Lecturer and VP roles in RCN

Education consultancy (2005 – present)

- WHO
- Aga Khan Development Network
- IntraHealth International
- Chartered institute of Personnel and Development
- Association of Business Executives
- University of Arts London
- British Standards Institute
- University of Kent
- Nursing Now



Introduction:

I first met Alan many years ago when the UK nurse practitioners were first introduced into the UK health system in the 90' s. We met and collaborated on many occasions at the annual International Nurse Practitioner conferences in the UK and Australia and later at the ICN /Advanced Nurse Practitioner Advanced Practice Nursing Network. He frequently ventured across the pond for AANP, Keystone and NONPF conferences. He was instrumental in supporting the education of nurse practitioners and assuring that the UK standards of nurse practitioner program were in alignment with the NONPF guidelines. He frequently presented at the conferences and remained committed to the quality of education for health care providers. Later he continued to be a frequent presenter at US, and UK national meetings and played an important role in the development of the International Council of Nurses Nurse Practitioner/ Advanced practice Nursing Network (ICN NP/APNN).

The educational modules he developed were franchised and made available to universities throughout the UK. This innovative model assured consistent standards throughout the nation.

Abstract

In this interview Alan discusses his role in developing modules for the nurse practitioner programs in the United Kingdom. The first nurse practitioner program in UK was a diploma program under the auspices of the Royal College of Nursing. The initial program was developed by Barbara Stilwell. Since universities were initially not interested in the program this was the best option for the beginning role. Working closely with Barbara, Alan constructed modules which were later franchised to universities. The decision to start small enabled the fledgling movement to gain momentum and acceptance. As the movement became more popular the education of nurse practitioners moved into the university level. Alan was instrumental in benchmarking the programs for parity to the United States. He aligned the programs to meet the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Curriculum Guidelines (NONPF).

Keywords: Nurse practitioner, international nursing, education, advanced practice nurses, nursing in the UK.

Interview Transcript:

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supporting the education of nurse practitioners and assuring that the UK standards of nurse practitioner program were in alignment with the NONPF guidelines. He frequently presented at the conferences and remained committed to the quality of education for health care providers.

How and when did you become interested in the nurse practitioner movement?

I was not interested in becoming an NP myself as I was happy with my role in education; I became involved with NPs by supporting Barbara Stilwell in developing the first UK NP Program whilst working at the RCN. Barbara Stilwell inspired me with her vision for nurse practitioner development in the UK (and beyond) and it was my privilege and pleasure to support her and the RCN in pioneering this work.

How did you progress from your initial interest to becoming a curriculum support advisor? Since this was a new program where did you find resources for curriculum, development?

My experience in education has been initially in teaching nurses in clinical practice and subsequently in preparing nurse teachers for their future role as educators. My specialist expertise was in curriculum design and development. The RCN appointed new faculty to develop the specialist education modules and my role was to help them construct and articulate the modules in the appropriate academic and professional format.

What were your main reasons for this?

The RCN sought to develop the NP role in the UK through advocacy of the role and program development. As I recall there was initially little appetite from the university sector nor from the nursing regulatory bodies for the role so it seemed tactically and politically prudent to start 'small' with a diploma program developed and delivered via the RCN, given its standing and reputation. The strategy was to launch the role, celebrate and promote its success, develop it further through franchise agreements with universities with a plan to replace the diploma with a degree programme. All of this would eventually bring 'pressure to bear' on the nursing regulators to formally recognise the role.

What experiences did you bring into the role?

As indicated earlier, I have significant experience and expertise in curriculum development and in working internationally. I had nursing roles in the Middle East and Cyprus when in the RAF and in nursing faculty development in Guyana. My role at the RCN involved developing and successfully getting university approval for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes for different specialisations in nursing.

How did you gather support from stakeholders?

I did not have a major role per se in getting stakeholder support as this was the purview of the then Director of Education of the RCN Institute. He gained support and advocacy from the RCN Chief Executive (called General Secretary at that time) and RCN Council. Knowing the prevailing culture at that time, the skills he used required both diplomacy and determination to see it through as there may have been 'pockets' of scepticism that needed to be 'won over' to the cause.

What challenges did you face? How were they resolved?

Scepticism about the role of the NP from some quarters (internally and externally); rather slow endorsement from UK nursing regulatory bodies; these were resolved by perseverance and success of programs and leadership by Barbara Stilwell. I think one of the really smart moves by the RCN was to build on the success of the early programs via the franchise agreements with other universities. This led to a growing belief in the value of the role. The students were excellent and returned to their practices as more highly skilled practitioners, valued by their GPs and colleagues and of course patients. This also led to the development of what I like to think of as a 'mini UK NONPF'. The next move was to benchmark the UK Nurse Practitioner curriculum with the USA model to check comparability in terms of content and level and outcomes and identify relative shortcomings and weaknesses. I was asked to undertake this and present it to the NONPF in the USA for consideration with a plan to address the relative weaknesses in the UK curriculum to achieve parity as far as possible to get a stronger international recognition and enable job movement from the UK to the USA.

Are there any relevant experiences that you would like to talk about?

I became more involved when asked to benchmark the RCN program with USA NP programs as described above. I also think my role in supporting the franchise agreements was both financially and politically beneficial to the college.

Was the concept of franchise agreements unique to the UK or did you know of this model from other sources?

The concept of education franchises was evolving in the UK university sector and other business enterprises. As we felt we had a 'unique product' it was a smart move pedagogically, financially and politically to franchise the RCN NP program.

What was (a) the most challenging in your career and (b) the most important?

Doing the benchmarking was not difficult for me personally but it was going to be an important challenge to get our program recognised by significant USA bodies e.g. NONPF – without this kind of recognition I think our program may have struggled to get the credibility it needed

Is there anything you would want to change? If so, what and why?

In hindsight, 'we' (the RCN) should have benchmarked earlier and started with a degree rather than diploma program – this may have expedited NP development in the UK. However, the 'baby steps' approach worked so perhaps the pace of change was correct given the 'political' climate at the time.

What do you see as pivotal moments in your career in the past years?

Not as an NP for me personally, but pivotal moments were the success of the early cohorts, benchmarking, raising level from diploma to degree and recognition and excellent support from NONPF; following on from this was franchising the RCN program to other UK universities and eventual UKCC support

What advice would you give to new nurse practitioners?

Enjoy your work; commit to lifelong learning; specialise if that's what you want

What do you see as the role of Nurse Practitioners/Advanced Practice Nursing in the next 5 - 10 years and what additional knowledge skills will be required?

Current core cognitive, interpersonal and practical skills remain but maybe need skills in disaster management e.g. health problems arising from climate change and maybe terrorist threat; will need to further develop technological skills to manage tele health. Finally, at the time of completing this interview, the world is grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic, making an incredible demand of healthcare systems globally. De facto, the role of the Nurse Practitioner in dealing with pandemics has risen to the surface as new viruses appear or current ones evolve.

Interview took place via email

April 17,2020

Barbara Sheer PhD, FNP, FAANP