

Phillips, Barbara, C.



Barbara C. Phillips was educated as a Geriatric Nurse Practitioner and a Family Nurse Practitioner. She began her nursing career as a nursing assistant, registered nurse, certified GNP and, later on, FNP. She also obtained a certification in hypnotherapy. After experiencing adversities in the clinical setting, she became a pioneer in business education for Nurse Practitioners. She has served on the Advisory Boards for the Duke Johnson & Johnson Nurse Leadership Program and has coached Leadership Fellows for many years.

Interview Abstract

Ms. Phillips was a pioneer in business education for Nurse Practitioners. She is the founder of Nurse Practitioner Business Owner and Clinician Business Institute. She also received the 2012

Washington State AANP Award for Excellence.

In the interview she discusses the challenges she faced as a novice Nurse Practitioner. She had a position terminated for lack of collaborative agreement, and resigned from another position on account of inadequate standards of practice.

She reviews the obstacles she endured throughout her career trajectory. She acquired immeasurable experience throughout the years which served as motivation to start her own practice and to provide business education to other Nurse Practitioners.

She recalls the adversities she encountered during her early years as a Nurse Practitioner and while starting her own business. The interview concludes with suggestions to embrace the changes in our healthcare system and to foster interdisciplinary respect and collaboration.

Keywords: Advanced practice nurses, Nurse practitioners, Business education, Entrepreneurship, Leadership

Biographical Sketch

Ms. Barbara C. Phillips, the founder of Nurse Practitioner Business Owner and Clinician Business Institute, provides business education, resources, and support to Advanced Practice Nurses.

She maintains that understanding the “Business of Healthcare” is critical to the future of Nurse Practitioners and the NP profession in general, no matter if an APN chooses to work for herself or be employed.

A pioneer of business education for NPs, she has spoken about business on a national scale, including practice startup, since 2007.

She is a published author and speaks and consults nationally and internationally. She is recognized as a leader and innovator, business expert, social media guru, and cutting-edge online educator, and was

awarded the 2012 Washington State AANP Award for Excellence.

Ms. Phillips is a graduate of the University of Washington in Seattle. She has owned practices in both Washington and currently in Missouri, where she offers medical hypnotherapy.

She has served on the Advisory Board for the Duke Johnson & Johnson Nurse Leadership Program and has coached Leadership Fellows for many years.

Interview Transcript

Barbara C. Phillips

Interview

AANP Oral History Project

Barbara C Phillips MN, GNP, FNP-BC, FAANP

Interviewer: Barbara Sheer

8/12/2020 via zoom

Bio:

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When did you become an NP? What was the motivation?

The road to being an NP was not a direct one for me. Before becoming a nurse in 1978, I was working as a nursing assistant in long term care. I completed my ADN at Seattle Central Community College (SCCC) in 1978. After a year in med-surg and telemetry, I found myself immersed in critical care where I thrived for many years. It was during this time, I picked up a part time position teaching nurses in long term care how to assess patients. I met a GNP of a Gerontological Nurse Practitioner program at the University of Washington in Seattle. I received my certification as a GNP in 1988 and never looked back. I returned to school completing my BSN at Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU) and eventually the MN-FNP at the University of Washington in 1998.

What experiences did you bring to the role?

I have had various experiences, including long term care, staff development, and 15 years as a critical care nurse. All positions contributed to my confidence in giving patient-centered care. The nurse’s role

in critical care requires a specific skill set. In addition to strong assessment skills and a strong understanding of pathophysiology, the ability to make decisions and practice autonomously helped enormously in my path to become an FNP.

Did you experience any challenges? How were they resolved?

As a National Health Service Corps Scholar (NHSC), I accepted a position near Buffalo, NY. The facility was not prepared for a nurse practitioner. Since there was no collaborative agreement in place, but no one was willing to sign one, my position needed to be terminated.

My next FNP position was in a small tribal clinic. My challenge there as the only provider, was to prove to the community that a NP could provide the health care they needed.

Like many NPs I worked in a private practice. Unfortunately, I shortly after I arrived, I realized this practice was not practicing to my standards in terms of patient care and legalities. I resigned from my position and it was after I left that I learned the practice has been under investigation and some of the patients I had seen were undercover agents. Eventually, I was ordered to testify. The physician was found guilty and sent to prison for 17 years.

It is a lesson to all nurse practitioners and health care providers to be mindful and always practice within ethical standards.

It was after this experience, that I faced the challenges of starting and operating a successful practice.

Would you discuss how you decided to begin a new innovative business?

I had belonged to a nurse practitioner listserv for years. When I started reaching out to other members about starting a practice, I found that as I started getting questions, there were more than I could keep up with. To disseminate information to our colleagues, I started blogging about starting a practice. However, the questions and request for help never let up. I eventually realized that to provide my colleagues with information and training, it became clear this was becoming a business.

My mother had been an entrepreneur, so some of my inspiration came from her. Over time, the blog lead to speaking engagements around the country, webinars, courses, private consultation, and more. Currently, my company provides education, resources and support to entrepreneurial and employed NP's alike. The blog, where we still actively publish content each week is NPBusiness.ORG and has served as a resource for students, professors, and clinicians alike.

Are there any experiences you would like to talk about?

I had practiced in Washington State with full practice authority since becoming an NP when I moved to Missouri. Adjusting to restrictive practice was challenging. A few years ago, I became certified in hypnotherapy. With the approval of the board of nursing, I practice medical hypnotherapy and continue with my activities promoting and advocating for NPs to learn about and participate in business.

What was most challenging in your career/most important?

With challenges, there is always growth and opportunity. Certainly, starting my practice without the benefit of a mentor was a challenge. The placement in Buffalo without a collaborative agreement

increased my awareness of the challenges that NPs in states without FPA experienced. And of course, having to testify against a physician colleague drove home how important it is to stick to ethical and standards of care. However, these challenges and learning opportunities prepared me to mentor and assist NPs in these challenges.

Is there anything you would want to change?

As I began my nursing career, there were two options of becoming a registered nurse: pursuing an Associate or a Baccalaureate Degree. Being accepted into two programs, I opted for the Associate Degree Program since both resulted in being eligible for the NCLEX and becoming a registered nurse.

Later, I entered a certificate program to become a GNP but felt the need to continue my education at the master's level. Unfortunately, at the time, I did not understand how these decisions would ultimately affect the trajectory of my career.

I went with the best advice I received at the time. Later, I wish that the clinical doctorate would have been an option, but when I was ready to continue my education, only the Ph.D. program was available. I was more interested in clinical aspects rather than research. If I could have foreseen the future and had known what I know now, I would have opted for a more direct path.

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

Pivotal moments occurred on a state by state basis as each state fought to expand the scope of practice boundaries. These struggles continue, but perhaps with the emergence of the coronavirus, the value of the full scope of practice for nurse practitioners in all states will be realized. On a national level, the Affordable Care Act increased the visibility of nurse practitioners and the services they provide.

I believe every nurse practitioner/advanced practice nurse benefits from having their own website, listing their titles and credentials. Not only would it increase visibility, but it would also help educate the public.

What advice would you give to new nurse practitioner?

I receive many requests from new graduates on beginning independent practice. My advice continues to be to first find a position, begin practicing, and gain clinical experience. You need to have a robust clinical background before contemplating starting a practice. Become an excellent clinician first.

Opening a practice requires not only clinical expertise but business acumen. This requires a different skillset not covered in educational programs.

What do you see as the role of Nurse practitioners in the next 25 years?

Practice will continue to change. With time, we will see full practice authority in all 50 states. Telehealth is here to stay; it will continue to evolve, utilizing expanding technologies and systems. NPs will likely be the profession that delivers the bulk of patient centered primary care.

We need to remember that independence does not mean functioning in a vacuum. To offer the best possible care, with the patient at the center of care, we need to foster a sense of mutual respect and collaboration among all healthcare providers in all disciplines.