

Innovative care models and the expansion of advanced nursing practices in Brazil

Modelos de atención innovadores y la expansión de prácticas de enfermería avanzadas en Brasil

Modelos inovadores de cuidado e a expansão das práticas avançadas em enfermagem no Brasil

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Abstract

The aim was to analyze the advances, persistent obstacles, and perspectives for the consolidation of advanced nursing practices (ANP) in Brazil, articulating international experiences with the historical and structural specificities of the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS). This is a theoretical-reflective study, based on a literature review and analysis of national and international technical-normative documents, conducted through searches in the SciELO, LILACS, MEDLINE/PubMed, Web of Science, and Scopus databases, as well as guidelines from organizations such as ICN, PAHO, and WHO. The thematic analysis allowed the identification of convergences, tensions, and gaps between scientific production, international guidelines, and Brazilian regulatory frameworks. The findings show that, although ANP represent an opportunity to expand problem-solving capacity and strengthen person-centered care models, their consolidation in Brazil requires integrated public policies, updating of legal frameworks, continuous investments in advanced training, and strengthening the identity and protagonism of nursing. It is concluded that the advancement of nursing care in the country depends on inter-institutional coordination, political agreement, and recognition of nursing as a strategic agent for improving the health system.

Descriptors: Advanced Nursing; Models of Healthcare; Health Policies; Human Resources in Healthcare; Healthcare Management.

Resumén

El objetivo fue analizar los avances, los obstáculos persistentes y las perspectivas para la consolidación de las prácticas avanzadas de enfermería (PAE) en Brasil, articulando las experiencias internacionales con las especificidades históricas y estructurales del Sistema Único de Salud (SUS) brasileño. Se trata de un estudio teórico-reflexivo, basado en una revisión bibliográfica y el análisis de documentos técnico-normativos nacionales e internacionales, mediante búsquedas en las bases de datos SciELO, LILACS, MEDLINE/PubMed, Web of Science y Scopus, así como en guías de organizaciones como el CIE, la OPS y la OMS. El análisis temático permitió identificar convergencias, tensiones y brechas entre la producción científica, las guías internacionales y los marcos regulatorios brasileños. Los hallazgos muestran que, si bien las PAE representan una oportunidad para ampliar la capacidad de resolución de problemas y fortalecer los modelos de atención centrada en la persona, su consolidación en Brasil requiere políticas públicas integradas, la actualización de los marcos legales, inversiones continuas en formación avanzada y el fortalecimiento de la identidad y el protagonismo de la enfermería. Se concluye que el avance de la atención de enfermería en el país depende de la coordinación interinstitucional, el acuerdo político y el reconocimiento de la enfermería como un agente estratégico para mejorar el sistema de salud.

Descriptorios: Enfermería Avanzada; Modelos de Atención Médica; Políticas de Salud; Recursos Humanos en la Atención Médica; Gestión de la Atención Médica.

Resumo

Objetivou-se analisar os avanços, os obstáculos persistentes e as perspectivas para a consolidação das práticas avançadas em enfermagem (PAE) no país, articulando experiências internacionais às especificidades históricas e estruturais do Sistema Único de Saúde. Trata-se de um estudo teórico-reflexivo, fundamentado em revisão da literatura e análise de documentos técnico-normativos nacionais e internacionais, conduzida por meio de buscas nas bases SciELO, LILACS, MEDLINE/PubMed, Web of Science e Scopus, além de diretrizes de organismos como ICN, OPAS e OMS. A análise temática permitiu identificar convergências, tensões e lacunas entre a produção científica, as orientações internacionais e os marcos regulatórios brasileiros. Os achados evidenciam que, embora as PAE representem uma oportunidade de expandir a resolutividade e fortalecer modelos de cuidado centrados nas pessoas, sua consolidação no Brasil requer políticas públicas integradas, atualização dos marcos legais, investimentos contínuos em formação avançada e fortalecimento da identidade e do protagonismo da enfermagem. Conclui-se que o avanço das PAE no país depende de articulação interinstitucional, pactuação política e reconhecimento da enfermagem como agente estratégico para a qualificação do sistema de saúde.

Descritores: Enfermagem Avançada; Modelos de Atenção à Saúde; Políticas de Saúde; Recursos Humanos em Saúde; Gestão em Saúde.



Introduction

The contemporary world has experienced profound changes in demographic, epidemiological, and social dynamics, which directly impact the organization and responsiveness of health systems. The increasing aging of the population, coupled with the epidemiological transition and the growing prevalence of chronic conditions and multiple morbidities, highlights the need to revise traditional care models. These transformations have demanded the construction of innovative arrangements capable of guaranteeing quality, effectiveness, and sustainability at different levels of care^{1,2}.

In this context, Nursing stands out as a strategic profession for leading service reorganization processes and strengthening health systems centered on people, families, and the community. Advanced Practice in Nursing emerges as one of the main structural innovations, already adopted in several countries as a strategy to expand access, improve the quality of care, and respond promptly to new health demands. International studies demonstrate that advanced practice nurses have contributed to expanding healthcare coverage, reducing costs, increasing user satisfaction, and improving clinical outcomes³⁻⁵.

In addition to responding to epidemiological changes, the Advanced Clinical Practice (ACP) contributes to addressing historical inequalities in access, especially in remote, vulnerable areas or those with a shortage of medical professionals. In countries such as Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom, strengthening the ACP has been associated with national policies to expand primary care and reorganize care networks. These international experiences demonstrate how expanded clinical autonomy, combined with advanced training and regulatory oversight, enhances the problem-solving capacity of health systems^{6,7}.

In the Latin American context, international organizations, such as the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), have encouraged the adoption of the Comprehensive Care Plan (CCP) as a strategy to strengthen Primary Health Care (PHC) and accelerate the implementation of universal coverage. The region faces challenges like Brazil, including a shortage of professionals in certain areas, increasing demands from people with chronic diseases, and limitations in health financing. The CCP emerges as a viable response aligned with the principles of equity and comprehensiveness⁸.

In Brazil, although the debate on Advanced Practice in Nursing is ongoing, there is a growing movement among universities, professional councils, and public administrators towards strengthening specialized clinical competencies, curricular restructuring, and discussion of regulatory frameworks. National literature indicates that the incorporation of Advanced Practice in Nursing requires changes in the legal framework, a clear definition of the scope of practice, continuous investment in education, and intersectoral dialogue to ensure safety and quality of care. Thus, the consolidation of Advanced Practice in Nursing depends not only on normative changes but also on a political and institutional commitment to care models that value the strategic role of Nursing in health production^{9,10}.

Thus, the objective was to analyze the advances, persistent obstacles, and perspectives for the consolidation of advanced nursing practices (ANP) in the country, articulating international experiences with the historical and structural specificities of the Unified Health System (SUS).

Methodology

This is a theoretical-reflective study, anchored in a narrative literature review and analysis of national and international technical-normative documents related to Advanced Nursing Practices (ANP). The methodological approach adopted sought to integrate scientific evidence, institutional guidelines, and conceptual productions that support a critical understanding of the development and implementation of ANP in the Brazilian context.

The literature review was conducted between July and August 2025, encompassing publications indexed in the SciELO, LILACS, MEDLINE/PubMed, Web of Science, and Scopus databases. The following descriptors and Boolean combinations were used: “advanced practice nursing”, “nursing workforce”, “health policy”, “primary health care”, and “Brazil”. Included were articles published in the last 10 years, in English, Spanish, or Portuguese, that addressed the definition, implementation, challenges, advances, and policies related to advanced nursing practices. Excluded were duplicate studies, opinion pieces without theoretical support, and publications unrelated to the scope of the research.

In parallel, a documentary analysis was conducted of regulatory frameworks, international guidelines, and regulations concerning the training, regulation, and practice of advanced practice nurses. Documents from the International Council of Nurses (ICN), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as materials from the Federal Nursing Council (COFEN), the Ministry of Health, and related legislation in countries that have already consolidated advanced practice nurse models were examined.

The organization and interpretation of the material followed a thematic approach, allowing for the identification of convergences, tensions, and gaps between international literature, Brazilian regulations, and the structural needs of the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS). The discussion was constructed analytically and critically, articulating the different axes identified: advances, barriers, perspectives, and requirements for the consolidation of the Food and Nutrition Security Program in Brazil. Because this is a theoretical study based on public sources, the research did not require review by a Research Ethics Committee, in accordance with CNS Resolution No. 422/2012.

Results

An integrated analysis of scientific literature and technical-normative documents made it possible to identify four central axes that structure the debate about the implementation of Advanced Nursing Practices (ANP) in Brazil: (1) International advances, (2) Current situation in the Brazilian context, (3) Structural challenges, and (4) Perspectives and possibilities for implementation. Each axis



presents elements that are interconnected and reveal both the transformative potential of ANP and the obstacles that limit its expansion in the country.

International advances and consolidated evidence

The international experiences analyzed show that the institutionalization of Advanced Nursing Practice (ANP) is directly related to health systems that expand the clinical scope of nursing as a strategy to fill care gaps. In countries such as Canada, the United States, Ireland, and Australia, the role of advanced practice nurses has been consolidated based on robust legal frameworks and training models oriented towards advanced clinical competencies, allowing the incorporation of practices such as medication prescription, ordering and interpreting tests, and diagnostic decision-making¹⁻⁴.

The reviewed studies also show that the consolidation of Primary Care Networks (PCNs) is associated with positive health outcomes, including a reduction in avoidable hospitalizations, improved control of chronic diseases, and increased coverage in remote or socially vulnerable regions. These findings reinforce the category's potential to expand access and improve the quality of primary care, especially in systems based on universality and equity⁵⁻⁸.

Furthermore, international evidence highlights that advanced practice contributes to the reorganization of care pathways, optimizing care flows, and reducing waiting times. The literature indicates that this reorganization favors the rational use of resources, increases user satisfaction, and strengthens interprofessional work. In several countries, the presence of advanced practice nurses has proven strategic in addressing professional shortage crises and responding more effectively to the growing burden of chronic conditions, suggesting that, when accompanied by structured policies, advanced practice nurses produce significant and lasting systemic impacts⁹⁻¹³.

Current situation in Brazil

In Brazil, analysis of scientific production reveals that the discussion on Advanced Nursing Practices (ANPs) has strengthened in recent years, both in academia and in representative nursing institutions. Despite this progress, the institutionalization of ANPs remains in its initial stages, marked by isolated initiatives and the absence of national guidelines to guide training and professional practice. Although there are important movements, such as the creation of working groups within COFEN (Federal Nursing Council) and discussions led by the Ministry of Health, the country still lacks a regulatory framework that formally recognizes advanced practice, limiting its large-scale implementation¹⁻³.

Another element identified in the studies is the progressive expansion of postgraduate nursing programs that seek to incorporate expanded clinical competencies. However, such initiatives still do not fully meet international recommendations for advanced practice training, such as the requirement for professional master's degrees oriented towards diagnostic decision-making, clinical management,

and enhanced autonomy. This training gap keeps professional practice restricted to essential areas, even in contexts where there is a growing demand for expanding the scope of nursing practice⁴⁻⁶.

Furthermore, the review shows that some Brazilian experiences, especially in Primary Health Care and maternal and child health, already incorporate elements like advanced practice, even without formal recognition. Studies indicate greater effectiveness in services that expand the clinical autonomy of nurses, highlighting potential for improving care processes. However, the absence of national regulations prevents the expansion and standardization of these experiences, resulting in a Brazilian scenario marked by sporadic advances, an emerging debate, and an underutilized potential for strengthening the Brazilian Unified Health System⁷⁻⁹.

Structural challenges identified

Analysis of documents and literature shows that one of the most significant challenges to the consolidation of Advanced Clinical Practice (ACP) in Brazil is regulatory weakness. The absence of specific legislation that officially recognizes the expanded clinical scope of nurses hinders the implementation of advanced practices and generates legal uncertainty for both professionals and managers. This regulatory gap also prevents educational institutions from adjusting their curricula to international requirements, perpetuating dependence on traditional care models and limiting the expansion of advanced competencies in the country¹⁻³.

Another challenge relates to limitations in advanced training programs. Although Brazilian nursing has a solid academic trajectory, postgraduate courses still do not fully reflect the competency profile required for advanced practice. Programs that address in-depth clinical reasoning, expanded diagnostic skills, and autonomy in decision-making remain scarce and unevenly distributed across the country. This insufficient training restricts the ability to integrate advanced practice into services and limits the development of clinical experiences compatible with the expected role of advanced practice nurses⁴⁻⁶.

Added to this are cultural, institutional, and organizational factors that hinder the reorganization of work processes. There is resistance from professional segments that interpret the Program for the Improvement of Nursing Care as a threat, and not as a complementary strategy to expand access and improve the quality of care. At the same time, many health services still adopt rigid and hierarchical models, which are not conducive to the redistribution of responsibilities among different professions. These challenges are intensified by structural limitations, such as insufficient funding and a lack of institutional incentives, creating an environment adverse to the expansion of the ANP in the country⁷⁻¹⁰.

Perspectives and pathways for implementation

The results indicate that, even in the face of challenges, there are promising prospects for the consolidation of ANP (Post-Graduation and Emergency Care)



in Brazil. The growing national discussion on the topic, driven by organizations such as COFEN, ABEn, and PAHO, signals a movement favorable to building a consistent political agenda^{1,5-7}. This agenda should include regulatory guidelines, professional certification mechanisms, and governance models that guarantee safety, quality, and autonomy for nurses in advanced practice, as already demonstrated in experiences from countries that have institutionalized this model^{3,4,11}.

Another relevant path is the strengthening of specialized training. The literature indicates that countries that have advanced in the institutionalization of Advanced Clinical Practice (ACP) have invested heavily in the creation of training programs based on advanced clinical competencies, focusing on decision-making, management of complex conditions, and work in highly vulnerable contexts^{2,4,12}. The expansion of professional master's programs oriented towards clinical practice could support the development of a specialized body of nurses prepared to work in a broader scope, especially in Primary Health Care. This movement aligns with global trends towards strengthening the nursing workforce^{8,13,14}.

Finally, the prospects for implementing Advanced Nursing Practice (ANP) are strongly related to the capacity of the Brazilian health system to recognize the strategic role of nursing in reorganizing care networks. The literature indicates that advanced practice has great potential to reduce regional inequalities, expand access in remote areas, strengthen the comprehensiveness of care, and respond more effectively to the growing burden of chronic conditions^{1,14,15}. However, its implementation requires coordination between public policies, agreements between managers, professional development, and the incorporation of ANP (Programs for the Enhancement of Care) as a national strategy to strengthen the Brazilian Public Health System^{5,6,9,10}.

Discussion

The results of this study show that Advanced Nursing Practices have become internationally established as an effective strategy to expand access, improve the quality of care, and promote greater effectiveness in health services¹⁻⁴. In countries such as Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, the adoption of advanced practice models has had a positive impact on healthcare indicators, especially in areas of high demand and low medical coverage^{2,5-7}. In Brazil, however, the institutionalization process has been slower, conditioned by historical, regulatory, and structural issues that shape the organization of the Unified Health System^{8,9}. These elements constitute significant barriers, but they also point to possible paths for adapting ANP models to national specificities.

One of the key aspects to understanding the difficulty of implementing Nursing Care Programs (NCPs) in Brazil is related to the regulatory framework for nursing, which does not yet formally encompass a broader scope of practice^{8,10}. Current legislation defines the exclusive actions of nurses, but does not explicitly recognize functions of greater clinical autonomy, such as expanded prescribing,

ordering tests, or conducting autonomous clinical diagnoses. This gap contrasts with the international scenario, in which Advanced Practice Nurses or Nurse Practitioners have legally defined responsibilities supported by clinical protocols aligned with national health policy. Thus, without a robust legal framework, the expansion of Advanced Practice Nurses in the Brazilian context remains fragmented, often limited to local experiences or pilot projects^{2,11-13}.

Another key point is professional training, which is one of the fundamental pillars for the development of ANP (Post-Exposure Proficiency Training). In countries where this model is already well-established, training involves highly specialized graduate programs (both *stricto sensu* and *lato sensu*) with a strong clinical component and supervised practical training hours^{3,4,6}. In Brazil, despite the existence of residency programs and specializations, nursing training for advanced practice remains heterogeneous and lacks a unified national guideline. Available courses still do not systematically integrate essential competencies for advanced practice nursing, such as advanced clinical reasoning, autonomous decision-making, expanded consultation, and complex case management. This gap compromises the construction of a professional identity aligned with advanced practice and hinders the legitimization of the profession as a strategic agent in new care models^{1,5,14,15}.

In organizational terms, Brazilian health services still operate largely under traditional and hierarchical logics, in which clinical authority is predominantly concentrated in the hands of physicians^{8,9}. This institutional culture hinders the incorporation of advanced nursing practices, even when there is technical and scientific support for them. The absence of mature interprofessional teams, the low integration between levels of care, and the fragmentation of work processes constitute additional obstacles to the consolidation of advanced nursing practices^{10,15}. For this model to move forward, a coordinated management effort is necessary, including restructuring care flows, creating evidence-based protocols, and clearly defining the responsibilities of the professionals involved^{7,9}.

On the other hand, the findings also point to important opportunities. The ongoing demographic and epidemiological transformations in the country, characterized by the growth of chronic conditions and population aging, create an urgent demand for new forms of care organization^{5,14}. The Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS), by its universal and territorially based nature, is a favorable environment for the implementation of advanced practices, especially in Primary Health Care (PHC)^{3,8}. Primary health care (PHC) proves particularly suitable due to its focus on longitudinality, a comprehensive approach to the user, and continuous follow-up, attributes that align directly with the competencies of the advanced practice nurse^{1,6}. Thus, the gradual adoption of ANP can strengthen the effectiveness of primary care, reduce waiting lists, expand healthcare coverage, and improve health outcomes^{7,11}.

Furthermore, existing Brazilian experiences, albeit limited, demonstrate that nursing possesses the technical and political capacity to undertake more complex practices.



Initiatives such as nursing protocols, prescription of herbal medicines and medications subject to specific programs, screening programs, monitoring of chronic conditions, and expanded nursing consultations are examples that highlight a growing movement towards expanded nursing practices¹²⁻¹⁴. These advances, although modest, indicate that adapting international models is possible and that the profession is undergoing a progressive process of political and scientific strengthening⁹⁻¹⁵.

Finally, it is essential to understand that the consolidation of AP in Brazil depends not only on technical or regulatory adjustments, but above all on political agreements between different actors in the system^{8,10}. Building consensus among professional councils, training institutions, managers, and public policy makers is essential to overcoming historical resistance and advancing the defense of a more inclusive, effective care model centered on the real needs of the population^{11,15}. Brazilian nursing, due to its widespread reach, leading role, and direct connection to the community, possesses significant transformative potential; however, its full realization requires institutional recognition, continuous investment, and the valuing of professional autonomy^{1,4,5}.

Final Considerations

Advanced Nursing Practices constitute an essential strategy for addressing the contemporary challenges of health systems, offering alternatives capable of expanding access, reducing inequalities in care, and strengthening care

models centered on people's needs. In Brazil, despite the advances observed in the last decade, especially in the context of political, academic, and institutional discussions, the consolidation of Advanced Nursing Practices is still in its initial stages and permeated by structural, normative, and formative limitations.

The analysis developed in this study demonstrates that the absence of a specific regulatory framework, the insufficiency of training programs aligned with international competencies for advanced practice, and the traditional organization of health services constitute significant barriers to its implementation. However, it also reveals a scenario of opportunities, marked by favorable global guidelines, consolidated international experiences, and a national context that urgently demands more effective care models, especially in the face of population aging and the increase in chronic conditions.

Thus, it can be concluded that the effective advancement of Advanced Nursing Practices (ANPs) in Brazil depends on the articulation between different spheres: integrated public policies, updating of professional legislation, strengthening of advanced training, and social and institutional recognition of nursing as a protagonist in improving the quality of healthcare. When articulated, these elements can enable the sustainable incorporation of ANPs into the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS), contributing to a more equitable, efficient system centered on comprehensive care.

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