

# Perspectives for Advanced Nursing Practice in Brazil

Perspectivas para a Prática Avançada de Enfermagem no Brasil  
Perspectivas para la Práctica Avanzada de Enfermería en Brasil

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Esclarecer o conceito de Prática Avançada de Enfermagem (PAE) e refletir sobre as perspectivas e avanços dessa prática no Brasil e no mundo, com o intuito de ampliar o conhecimento e subsidiar sua implementação no contexto nacional. **Métodos:** Trata-se de um estudo teórico-reflexivo, desenvolvido a partir de discussões sobre a Prática Avançada em Enfermagem. A análise foi sustentada em literatura nacional e internacional, selecionada criticamente pelos autores, independentemente do intervalo temporal. **Resultados:** A PAE está consolidada em diversos países, como Estados Unidos e Canadá, com benefícios como redução de custos, melhoria na qualidade e segurança do atendimento, além de maior satisfação dos pacientes e profissionais. No Brasil, apesar de condições favoráveis — como programas consolidados de pós-graduação e estrutura do Sistema Único de Saúde —, persistem entraves políticos, educacionais e regulatórios que dificultam a implementação plena da PAE. **Conclusão:** A PAE representa uma estratégia promissora para o fortalecimento do Sistema Único de Saúde, com potencial para ampliar o acesso, a resolutividade e a integralidade do cuidado. Contudo, sua efetivação no Brasil exige superação de barreiras normativas, educacionais e culturais, além do fortalecimento da formação avançada de enfermeiros. A institucionalização da PAE pode consolidar a enfermagem como protagonista no sistema de saúde, promovendo maior autonomia profissional, qualificação do cuidado e redução de desigualdades no acesso aos serviços de saúde.

**DESCRIPTORIOS:** Prática Avançada de Enfermagem; Raciocínio Clínico; Processo de Enfermagem.

## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To clarify the concept of Advanced Nursing Practice (ANP) and to reflect on the perspectives and advances of this practice in Brazil and worldwide, with the aim of expanding knowledge and supporting its implementation in the national context. **Methods:** This is a theoretical-reflective study, developed from discussions on Advanced Nursing Practice. The analysis was supported by national and international literature, critically selected by the authors, regardless of the time interval. **Results:** ANP is consolidated in several countries, such as the United States and Canada, with benefits such as cost reduction, improvement in the quality and safety of care, in addition to greater satisfaction of patients and professionals. In Brazil, despite favorable conditions — such as consolidated postgraduate programs and the structure of the Unified Health System —, political, educational and regulatory obstacles persist that hinder the full implementation of ANP. **Conclusion:** The ANP represents a promising strategy for strengthening the Unified Health System, with the potential to expand access, resolution and comprehensiveness of care. However, its implementation in Brazil requires overcoming regulatory, educational and cultural barriers, in addition to strengthening advanced training for nurses. The institutionalization of the ANP can consolidate nursing as a protagonist in the health system, promoting greater professional autonomy, qualified care and reducing inequalities in access to health services.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Advanced Practice Nursing; Clinical Reasoning; Nursing Process.

## RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** Clarificar el concepto de Práctica Avanzada de Enfermería (PAE) y reflexionar sobre las perspectivas y avances de esta práctica en Brasil y en el mundo, con el objetivo de ampliar el conocimiento y apoyar su implementación en el contexto nacional. **Métodos:** Se trata de un estudio teórico-reflexivo, desarrollado a partir de discusiones sobre Práctica Avanzada en Enfermería. El análisis se apoyó en literatura nacional e internacional, seleccionada críticamente por los autores, independientemente del intervalo de tiempo. **Resultados:** La PAE se consolida en varios países, como Estados Unidos y Canadá, con beneficios como reducción de costos, mejora en la calidad y seguridad de la atención, además de mayor satisfacción entre pacientes y profesionales. En Brasil, a pesar de condiciones favorables — como los programas de posgrado consolidados y la estructura del Sistema Único de Salud — persisten obstáculos políticos, educativos y regulatorios que dificultan la plena implementación del PAE. **Conclusión:** El PAE representa una estrategia promissora para el fortalecimiento del Sistema Único de Salud, con potencial para ampliar el acceso, la resolutividad y la atención integral. Sin embargo, su implementación en Brasil requiere superar barreras regulatorias, educativas y culturales, además de fortalecer la formación avanzada de enfermeras. La institucionalización de la EPA puede consolidar a la enfermería como protagonista en el sistema de salud, promoviendo una mayor autonomía profesional, una atención cualificada y reduciendo las desigualdades en el acceso a los servicios de salud.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Enfermería de Práctica Avanzada; Razonamiento Clínico; Proceso de Enfermería

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**INTRODUCTION**

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) recommend increasing the number of Advanced Practice Nurses in order to better develop health care practices capable of meeting the health needs of the population<sup>1</sup>. This recommendation is in line with the International Council of Nurses (CIE) and its four objectives for the development of the profession around the world<sup>2</sup>.

The CIE defines the Advanced Practice Nurse (APN) as a "nurse who has acquired the specialized knowledge base, complex decision-making skills and clinical competencies for expanded practice, the characteristics of which are shaped by the context and/or country in which he/she is licensed to practice. A master's degree is recommended for the entry level"<sup>2,3,4</sup>. It also includes aspects that affirm the Autarchy's commitment to the development of professionals through the creation of Professional Master's Degrees for this purpose, in order to effectively contribute to improving the quality of health care, especially nursing<sup>5,6</sup>.

It is noteworthy that in the Americas, the EPA began its work more than 60 years ago in the United States of America (USA), followed by Canada and other developing countries such as Chile. These professionals play an important role in giving the population access to the health system, as well as

providing direct assistance to users. However, Latin America, and Brazil in particular, is one of the only regions in the world without this necessary workforce<sup>4,7</sup>.

According to PAHO, Latin American countries, with a focus on Brazil, have great potential for the development of the EAP, aiming at educational excellence in Nursing, thus enabling the contribution of better results for population health<sup>8</sup>. Thus, it is clear that Brazilian nursing has favorable conditions for the implementation of the EAP, since it has the ideal and necessary qualifications to meet the recommended standards, including leadership in graduate nursing programs, a national health system with well-established family health programs, an inter-professional team, and a political decision to expand access and universal coverage for users of the health system.

In view of this context, implementing the EAP in Brazil means making efforts to meet the global, national and regional challenges for universal access and coverage. With this in mind, the aim was to clarify the concept of Advanced Nursing Practice, as well as to reflect on the perspectives and advances of the subject in Brazil and around the world, in order to improve knowledge and help with implementation.

**METHODS**

This is a reflective theoretical study,

derived from discussions held in the construction and organization of content about Advanced Nursing Practice, with the aim of reflecting on the concepts that permeate APN, as well as guiding the current advances and perspectives of the theme in Brazil and worldwide.

The reflective analysis was based on national and international literature, selected by the authors themselves, based on their critical thinking and approach to the subject, regardless of the time interval. The search was carried out using the Virtual Health Library, the CAPES Journals Portal, PubMed Central® and the Scopus database. The searches were carried out in May 2025, using the Health Science/Medical Subject Headings Descriptors (DeCS/MeSH) in Portuguese: Advanced Practice Nursing AND Evidence-Based Nursing AND Nursing Process AND Clinical Decision Making, correctly translated into English: Advanced Practice Nursing AND Evidence-Based Nursing AND Nursing Process AND Clinical Decision Making.

**DISCUSSION****EAPs in Brazil and worldwide**

Although titles, roles and duties vary around the world, the term advanced practice nurse is widely accepted, and represents four generally established advanced roles: Certified Nurse Practitioner (CNP) - Certified Nurse, Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) - Clinical Nurse

Specialist, Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM) - Obstetric Nurse and Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) - Nurse Anesthetist. The ICN's most recent definition of the EPA defined a master's degree as the minimum education requirement and emphasized an advanced level of decision-making and responsibility<sup>9,10</sup>.

In emergency and intensive care settings, EPAs have been shown to increase patient satisfaction while reducing treatment delay, length of stay, mortality and cost. In acute and intensive care settings, APCs improve patient care, continuity of care, quality and safety, educational and staff satisfaction and the educational experience of residents and fellows<sup>10,11</sup>. Furthermore, when comparing the care provided by medical professionals and EPAs during hospitalization and mortality, there is no dichotomy in the outcomes<sup>12,13</sup>, however, with regard to auditing, a lower rate of errors in drug prescription by nurses in the Intensive Care Unit was reported<sup>14</sup>.

Countries such as Canada and the United States of America integrate the role of the EAP into the health system and show the safety and quality of care provided by nurses in this role, resulting in positive health data achieved by this type of nursing. In general terms, advanced practice nurses assess, diagnose, request and interpret laboratory tests and prescribe medications for individual patients within a framework of collaboration with other medical providers and systems<sup>9</sup>, which is compatible with the Brazilian professional nursing practice law, according to article 11 of Federal Law No. 7,498/1986 and Ordinance No. 2,436, of September 21, 2017, which establishes the revision of guidelines for the organization of Primary Care, within the scope of the Unified Health System (SUS)<sup>15,16</sup>.

Although recommended and indicated worldwide, the practice of prescribing medication as a competence

of the PAE, in Brazilian territory, comes up against gaps that prevent the prescription of more invasive medications and procedures, being mainly carried out by medical efforts to contain the expansion of the PAE and curricular standards of preparation for the PAE and basic training of nurses<sup>17</sup>. In this sense, there are also concerns about patient safety and the quality of care provided.

With regard to EAP training in Brazil, there are a large number of nursing schools and, consequently, an increase in the number of professionals trained each year. Private colleges, driven by the education business community, have expanded the number of places on offer to disadvantaged sectors of the population. The expansion of higher education has been supported by the phenomenon of certification, as the job market has raised the demand for diplomas for positions previously held by mid-level professionals<sup>18,19,20</sup> (Soares et al., 2021; Palheta et al., 2020; Frota et al., 2020).

However, with the boom in private nursing schools, the Distance Learning (DL) modality came into force with the aim of profit, being distributed unequally, and promoting poorer teaching quality, and therefore poorer development of clinical and critical thinking in the nurses trained<sup>18</sup>. In addition, data from the National Student Performance Exam, Enade, show a disaster arising from distance learning in health courses, where only 1.3% of institutions achieved maximum marks and 512 had unsatisfactory performance, as a result, the Ministry of Education (MEC) suspended the opening of distance learning nursing courses on June 6, 2024, and made the ban on distance learning nursing courses official on May 19, 2025. In this way, better training was made possible for Brazilian nurses in order to develop better clinical reasoning, which was already recommended by the Federal Nursing

Council (COFEN)<sup>21,22</sup>.

Thus, the discussion about the EAP in Brazil continues to grow, however, it is still unclear what actions should be related to the EAP and what is needed to make it legally capable of being carried out. Among the attributes of advanced practice nurses described in this article, educational preparation at master's and professional doctorate level is one of the most important characteristics of APNs; however, these graduate programs still lack nurses who truly understand their importance in the field of care practice<sup>23,24,25</sup>.

Master's and professional doctorate programs prepare nurses to work in a more qualified way, offering a solid foundation in both theoretical and practical aspects, which contributes to the development of specialized skills. This training has stimulated the advancement of scientific production and knowledge in the field of nursing<sup>25,26,27,28</sup>, focusing on the main requirement for the EAP.

### Contributions to the field

The subject reflects on important implications and challenges for the nursing field, especially with regard to professional qualification, strengthening the care process and valuing nurses as protagonists in health care. The recent ban on new distance learning nursing courses by the Ministry of Education (MEC) demonstrates an important action to qualify training and restore the credibility of higher education in nursing, an indispensable condition for consolidating the EAP in the country.

The implementation of the EAP in Brazil represents a significant step forward for the profession, by broadening the scope of nurses' work, enabling greater autonomy in clinical decision-making, prescribing medication and carrying out diagnostic and therapeutic procedures. These competencies reinforce the importance of advanced

and specialized training, with a focus on developing complex skills, critical thinking and leadership in care management.

For nursing, the institutionalization of the PAE is a strategic opportunity to consolidate the social and political recognition of the profession, as well as making an effective contribution to improving the quality and safety of the care provided to SUS users. In this sense, the work of advanced practice nurses can mitigate inequalities in access to health services, especially in remote and vulnerable regions, strengthening Primary Health Care and promoting comprehensive care.

#### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The implementation of EAP in Brazil represents a promising strategy for

strengthening the SUS, especially with regard to expanding access, comprehensive care and resolute care. Although the country has structural and training conditions that are favorable to the introduction of EAP, there are still political, educational and regulatory obstacles that need to be tackled.

From an educational point of view, there is a trend towards improving the value of advanced training that prepares nurses to act with clinical autonomy. The training of masters and doctors in nursing, with a practical-assistance focus, is one of the fundamental pillars for the development of the EAP. However, obstacles persist that slow down the implementation of this model. The lack of specific regulations for the expanded scope of nursing, the lack of knowledge on the part of the population and other professional cate-

gories about the PAE's attributions, and institutional resistance to the autonomy of nurses are all challenges that are still present. Added to this is the weakness of public policies aimed at incorporating advanced practice as a structuring component of health care in Brazil.

Despite these barriers, there is a growing movement in defense of valuing nursing and strengthening its role in direct care for the population. In this sense, the prospects for PAE in Brazil include the expansion of qualified training, the development of advanced clinical skills, the regulation of professional practice in line with social needs, and the recognition of nursing as a protagonist in health promotion and in the construction of a more accessible, safe and resolute care system.

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