

Sasakawa Nursing Fellow 2023 Annual Report

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Pediatric Nurse Practitioner - Acute Care Course track

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I. Background

Two years have passed since I started my Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree at the University of Washington as a Sasakawa Nursing Fellow Scholarship recipient. My ultimate goal, implementing the Nurse Practitioner (NP) system in the Japanese healthcare system, has been and continues to be my primary driving source. This annual report will serve two purposes: 1) to reflect and evaluate my annual progress made as a Sasakawa Nursing Fellow and 2) to identify the next short-term goals that I aim to achieve in the next academic year of 2024.

II. Academic Progress

1) DNP Pediatric Nurse Practitioner course

The second-year DNP courses were more hands-on training focusing on advanced nursing practices, whereas the first-year courses were more lecture-style courses, such as how to approach patients holistically. The practical training of "advanced nursing practice" in the United States primarily consists of three components: history taking, physical examination, and management, including prescription, though it is slightly different depending on target populations (adult-gerontology, family, pediatric, psychiatric, and midwifery) and settings (primary or acute). As an international nurse educated and trained solely in Japan, the transition from Registered Nurse to NP has been a challenging process because of the significant difference in the scope of practice.

Throughout the two years, I started to grasp an NP role and its impact on society. The idea of NP was first established in the 1960s in Colorado to address an increased primary care health for underserved populations.¹ It took more than 20 years of lobbying efforts until NPs got approval to receive reimbursement from governmental health care.¹ One of the most common global barriers to implementing the NP system is physicians' belief that NPs will impair the patient's safety. However, this is scientifically not correct.² NPs are more likely to work for vulnerable populations, such as poor or uninsured populations and people living in rural/isolated areas, which increases healthcare access to them physically and economically.²

Looking at the Japanese nursing system, the discussion of implementing the NP is ongoing. In 2014, there was historical progress in expanding the scope of nurses made by initiating a training system for nurses performing specific interventions. (特定行為に係る看護師の研修制度) However, the majority of nurses who completed the training are working in intraoperative or acute care settings, and only less than 30% of the nurses serve their role in primary or home care settings.³ I believe this is a huge gap in what we urgently need, at least what I saw at Goto Island, Nagasaki, during my rural health/home care training. In addition, the current training of 特定行為に係る看護師の研修 emphasizes on procedure and interventions. To develop optimized advanced nursing roles, I believe more transition is necessary to fill the underlying health needs.

As of March 2024, I now have a basic understanding of NP roles at an individual care provider level. Beyond the individual level, my next step will be to get a bigger picture of their role at the organizational and system level. The graduate certificate programs below will greatly complement my DNP from a wider perspective.

2) Graduate Certificate programs

- **Global Health Nursing certificate**

I conducted my capstone project in the Amazon Rainforest in Iquitos, Peru, focusing on an urban informal community called Claverito. While the community borders the lively city center of Iquitos, the government does not recognize the community as official, making accessing public services extremely limited. My project aimed to increase the accessibility of available resources by developing a resource manual for the community that was originally created by former DNP students. However, my first survey revealed some of the residents needed assistance in reading or writing language, and a resource manual

was not aligned with the community's needs. Shifting my approach to a community participatory approach by collaborating with local researchers and leading residents, I identified the community barriers and facilitators of research access. This valuable experience made me realize how the need for assessment and involvement of local people is essential to minimizing barriers. Upon the completion of the Global Health Nursing certificate, I was able to learn about the current global health concerns and interdisciplinary approach.

- **Population Health Equity certificate**

Following the completion of the certificate, I decided to start my second certificate, the Population Health Certificate, for my further growth. This program aims to develop capabilities for addressing the underlying causes of health inequity. I hope to acquire a new perspective on healthcare from population health.

III. Goal of the 2024 academic year

I aim to attain the following goals through the clinical rotations, the Population Health certificate capstone project, and the DNP final project.

Objective 1: Identify the NP roles and their impact on limited resource settings.

Objective 2: Obtain a fundamental understanding of systemic approaches and strategies to healthcare

Objective 3: Describe the barriers and facilitators of the implementation of the NP system in Asian countries where the system has been adopted.

IV. Conclusion

I am confident in my progress over the past two years, accumulating a wide range of knowledge and first-hand experience to establish the NP system in Japan while developing a clearer vision of the NP role that is optimized for Japan's healthcare system. To take the initiative for transformative change at the national level of Japan, I aspire to gain more competencies in system-level thinking and strategic approach underpinned by scientific evidence. The aging in Japan is rapidly progressing, and the health needs are becoming more diverse. I am very excited to learn more about advanced nursing to fulfill our shared goal of "better health for all."

V. Acknowledgment

As a recipient of the Sasakawa Nursing Fellow Scholarship, I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to the Sasakawa Health Organization for making my academic trajectory in the United States possible. The mission and value of Sasakawa Nursing Fellow have always broadened my view of health, which also inspired my motivation as a nurse professional. I cannot thank you all enough for the tremendous opportunity and warm support.

VI. Reference

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