



**THE EMERGING ROLE OF ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSING IN CHILE:
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES****EL ROL EMERGENTE DE LA ENFERMERÍA DE PRÁCTICA AVANZADA EN
CHILE: DESAFÍOS Y OPORTUNIDADES****O PAPEL EMERGENTE DA ENFERMAGEM DE PRÁTICA AVANÇADA NO
CHILE: DESAFIOS E OPORTUNIDADES****Felipe Cortés Leddy** ^{1,2a} ¹ Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez. Santiago, Chile.² Universidad Diego Portales. Santiago, Chile.^a **Corresponding Author:** fcortesleddy@minsal.cl **Cite as:** Cortés Leddy F. The Emerging Role of Advanced Practice Nursing in Chile: Challenges and Opportunities. Rev. chil. enferm. 2023;5(2):7-10. <https://doi.org/10.5354/2452-5839.2023.73476>

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Dear Editor,

Advanced Practice Nursing (APN) has gained particular relevance worldwide. Similarly, it is a subject of discussion and dialogue within the healthcare context in Chile. Its incorporation in our country is framed within the complex and diverse needs of a population that has experienced demographic changes, characterized by an increase in life expectancy and aging. This is coupled with a rise in the prevalence of non-communicable chronic diseases (NCDs) which generate a high prevalence of multimorbidity and morbimortality. The above has resulted in efforts being focused on improving the articulation within the health system, following a comprehensive person-centered approach.

While the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its consequences have highlighted, among other things, the importance of incorporating APNs into global healthcare systems, with particular emphasis on Latin America and the Caribbean, the implementation of this new professional role in the Chilean health system presents challenges and opportunities that are linked to the current national situation.

Shortage of Medical Professionals in Primary Health Care

Within the context of the supply and demand of health services, the deficit of medical professionals in the Chilean public health system and in Primary Health Care (PHC) is exacerbated by its asymmetric distribution throughout the country, which is evident especially in rural and remote areas. Despite the existence of measures aimed at strengthening the system, the population perceives a health crisis characterized, among other things, by the lack of access to comprehensive, timely, relevant, continuous, and person-centered health care.¹

Advanced Practice Nursing Training in Chile

Chile has made progress in the training of Advanced Practice Nurses through master's programs with a clinical focus in national universities.² This is in line with the international experience of medical staff shortage at the primary care level and the increasing demand for health care from the population. These professionals are highly trained in problem-solving skills. In this regard, it is important to ensure that these programs, in addition to their high technical quality, are aligned with the current needs of the health system and the population to be served.

Definition of the Role of Advanced Practice Nurses

A precise definition of what Advanced Practice Nursing entails and who qualifies as an APN remains an evolving topic. This is also the case in Chile, where a consensus is needed on the functions and scope of these professionals, along with the need to legally recognize this new role.

Funding and Organization of Work

A comprehensive analysis of funding systems and work organization is required for APNs to be able to perform their duties in a coherent and articulated manner within healthcare networks. In Chile, this entails addressing regulatory, financial, and labor-related aspects. This would require, among other measures, greater clarity in regulations that define the scope of action of APNs within the existing strengthening strategies of *Modelo de Atención Integral de Salud* (Comprehensive Health Care Model [MAIS]) and *Redes Integradas de Servicios de Salud* (Integrated Health Services Networks [RISS]). This is the case of *Estrategia de Cuidado Integral Centrado en las Personas* (Person-Centered Comprehensive Care Strategy [ECICEP]) which seeks the promotion, prevention, and management of chronic conditions in the context of multimorbidity.³⁻⁴

Leadership in Nursing:

It is necessary to highlight and strengthen the role of nursing leadership in order to align the functions of APNs with the political priorities of the country, working in collaboration with network stakeholders and decision-makers.⁵ In this regard, the Chilean Ministry of Health has a National Nursing Directorate (*Dirección Nacional de Enfermería*, or DNE), which is responsible for developing the profession at the national level.

Telemedicine and technology in healthcare:

Telehealth strategies emerging from the central level, through the Department of Digital Health (*Departamento de Salud Digital*) under the Ministry of Health's Undersecretariat for Healthcare Networks (*Subsecretaría de Redes Asistenciales*)⁶ have become increasingly relevant in recent years. This is also the case of different technological advancements in the field that aim at providing comprehensive healthcare solutions to the population. In this context, the ability of Advanced Practice Nurses to adapt and effectively utilize telehealth, as well as perform remote interventions comprehensively across the life course, could contribute to improving access to healthcare.

Universalization of Primary Health Care:

Strengthening PHC is a national priority, and the current efforts aimed at its universalization are one of the fundamental steps towards transforming the Chilean healthcare system into a Universal Health System.⁷ This represents an opportunity to, among other things, rethink the undergraduate training of healthcare professionals, prioritizing an emphasis on PHC and the management of chronic diseases, including cancer as a ministerial priority, while also ensuring a comprehensive person-centered approach and the transition of care within the network.

In this regard, APNs play a role that needs to be analyzed, as it has been shown at the international level that trained professionals are cost-effective in the context of addressing healthcare needs and gaps across the lifespan of the population, thus contributing to continuous and quality care in all territories.⁸

The situation of Advanced Practice Nurses in Chile mirrors the challenges and opportunities that this role faces in the context of global healthcare. International evidence on healthcare has emphasized the importance of these professionals. The implementation of this role requires a thorough analysis that makes its integration into the healthcare system seamless and places individuals at the center of care.

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