

The implementation and evaluation of ANP/CNS-led nursing grand rounds in an Irish teaching hospital

Shirley Ingram, Cathy McHale, Elizabeth O'Neill, Caroline Reilly and **Barry McBrien**

ABSTRACT

Background: Nursing grand rounds (NGR) is a popular continuing professional development (CPD) resource led by advanced practice nurses. There is a dearth of knowledge on the impact on those who attend NGR in Ireland. **Aim:** This service analysis aimed to evaluate who attended NGR in one Irish hospital and the impact, if any, on attendees. **Methods:** A 10-item survey consisting of Likert scale questions was completed by 110 participants, a response rate of 18%. **Findings:** The majority of the attendees were student nurses (29%) and advanced nurse practitioners (or candidates) (19%), with staff nurse attendance low at 3%. Attendees showed positive impacts on the understanding of different nursing roles, nursing knowledge and nursing collaboration. **Conclusion:** This evaluation of the impact of NGR on attendees indicates a positive level of education, knowledge, potential collaboration, nurse manager support, and is evidence of nursing leadership in CPD provision. Further research is required to ascertain reasons for poor staff nurse attendance at NGR.

Key words: Nursing grand rounds ■ Advanced nurse practitioner
■ Clinical nurse specialist ■ Collaboration ■ Role expansion

Nurses and midwives maintain and improve their knowledge, skills and competence through continuing professional development (CPD), which is an integral component in the ongoing delivery of safe, high-quality care for the benefit of service users (Office of the Nursing and Midwifery Services

Director (ONMSD), 2024). A meta-synthesis by Mlambo et al (2021) showed that nurses valued CPD as fundamental to 'professionalism'. Traditionally, nurses have employed innovative methods for engaging in CPD, ie case studies (Popil, 2010), and academic partnerships (Goodwin et al, 2021; Carney et al, 2024) and it has been recommended that organisations should make CPD more accessible (Mlambo et al, 2021).

The concept of nursing grand rounds, based on the model of physician grand rounds, was first discussed as an educational resource for nurses in the USA by Batty et al (1983), who highlighted that nursing grand rounds (NGR) would allow nurses to stay up to date with education, learn from their peers and consider different pathways in nursing. The NGR model has been found to support evidence-based nursing and create a social setting in which the science and art of nursing can be presented (Valizadeh et al, 2019). NGR provides a forum to provide nurses with up-to-date best practice guidelines, which in turn benefits the patient (Valizadeh et al, 2019), and the nursing literature has explored the initiative in specific specialty areas including paediatrics (Laibhen-Parkes et al, 2015) and oncology (Haigh et al, 2016).

The institution discussed in this article is a public, voluntary teaching hospital and is one of the leading teaching hospitals in the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group. NGR sessions were implemented in May 2022 by a group of three advanced nurse practitioners (ANPs) and two clinical nurse specialists (CNSs), and facilitated by a member of nurse practice development with full support and guidance from the director of nursing. The goal was to create a social setting for learning and showcase the role that nurses play in providing evidence-based care. The specific aim and objectives were created from the available literature (Armola et al, 2010; Odedra and Hitchcock, 2012; Valizadeh et al, 2019) (*Box 1*).

NGR are held monthly with a virtual option also available; they are open to all hospital staff and the wider community care area. Each month an ANP and a CNS deliver a presentation on their respective roles, encompassing the clinical competencies for each role, and the session is chaired by an ANP/CNS, enhancing the leadership role. The delivery of NGR has now commenced in the majority of teaching hospitals in Ireland; although there is evidence on the use of this approach as a mode of education and the impact on those who attend (Armola et al, 2010; Odera and Hitchcock, 2012; Valizadeh et al, 2019; Goodwin et al,

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Box 1. Aim and objectives of nursing grand rounds

Aim of nursing grand rounds

- To promote an increased awareness and understanding of the roles of clinical nurse specialist (CNS) and advanced nurse practitioner (ANP), therefore nurturing the concept of progression within nursing roles

Objectives of nursing grand rounds

- To promote professional development with opportunities for collaboration by providing a supportive environment for all nurses to share ideas
- Facilitating peer-to-peer support among nurses to expand their repertoire of skills, such as assistance and guidance regarding delivery of presentations
- To increase the visibility of nursing expertise both within and outside the discipline of nursing
- To expose nurses to specialist aspects of a range of conditions that they may not be familiar with in their current area, facilitating the extrapolation of nursing care measures that colleagues can apply to their own practice
- To celebrate the unique aspects of the nursing role and to exhibit the leadership, professionalism, holism and expertise of ANP and CNS approaches to care

Box 2. Survey format to elicit participants' feedback following nursing grand round sessions		
Statement/question		Response options
1	Nursing grand rounds (NGR) has given me a better understanding of the registered advanced nurse practitioner/clinical nurse specialist (RANP/CNS) role	Strongly agree
2	The presentations have exposed me to nursing services I was unaware of	
3	The knowledge I have obtained during NGR is relevant to my current role	Agree
4	I would recommend NGR to my colleagues	Neither agree nor disagree
5	NGRs will influence my collaboration with RANPs/CNSs in delivering patient care	
6	NGR would encourage me to present at future NGRs	Disagree
7	I was supported by my line manager to attend grand rounds today	Strongly disagree
8	The venue was appropriate	
9	The time was appropriate	
10	What is your profession/role?	

2021; Carney et al, 2024), there is a lack of detailed evaluation of those who attend NGR, in particular on the awareness and understanding of roles of advanced practice nurses. This article evaluates the impact in one large Dublin teaching hospital.

Aim and objectives

The aim of this service analysis was to analyse who attended NGR and the extent of impact, with the following objectives:

- Breakdown of attendees by professional/clinical role
- Assess whether there is a better understanding of the ANP/ CNS role in varied specialties
- Assess whether NGR influences collaboration in delivering patient care
- Determine whether attendees were exposed to previously unknown ANP/CNS services
- Investigate if NGR attendance would encourage nurses to present their role in this forum.

Methods

A 10-item survey was developed to elicit feedback on the impact of the NGR sessions, consisting of a Likert scale and open-ended statements (see Box 2). From May 2022 until June 2023 at each NGR session a QR code was made available to link to the questionnaire on the Survey Monkey platform. All responses were anonymous and analysed via Survey Monkey. Attendees could respond once after each session.

Attendance was captured for 10 of the in-person sessions via a sign-in book, which included attendees' professional roles.

Ethical permission to undertake a service analysis was obtained from the local research and ethics committee.

Results

Attendance at nursing grand rounds

A total of 603 people attended 12-monthly nursing grand rounds: n=435 (72%) in person and n=168 (28%) via the virtual platform. Professional sign-in data were recorded for 10 of the in-person sessions n=391 via a sign in book (Figure 1).

Survey

Over the monthly sessions, there were 110 instances of survey completion, indicating a response rate of 18% (n=110/603).

Because some survey respondents attended more than one in-person or virtual session, the numbers for attendance record multiple attendances for one person, as do the numbers recorded for professional role. This is reflected in the information reported below.

Venue and line manager support to attend

Attendees were asked whether the time of NGR enabled attendance and all 110 of those who responded provided feedback: 65 (59%) strongly agreed, 34 (31%) agreed, 8 (7%) were neutral and 3 (3%) disagreed. When asked about the venue being appropriate, 107 responded to this question: 87 (81%) strongly agreed, 17 (16%) agreed and 3 (3%) remained neutral.

In response to the statement, 'I was supported by my line manager to attend grand rounds today', all 110 respondents replied', 68 (62%) strongly agreed, 24 (22%) agreed, 14 (13 %) were neutral, and 4 (3%) disagreed (Figure 2).

Understanding of the ANP/CNS roles and professional collaboration

All 110 survey respondents provided feedback on 'Nursing grand rounds has given me a better understanding of the ANP/ CNS role', with 69% (n=76) strongly agreeing and 31% (n=34) agreeing with the statement. There were no neutral responses.

When asked if NGR would influence collaboration with ANP/CNS in delivering patient care, again, all 110 responded: the majority strongly agreed ($n=71$; 65%), or agreed ($n=34$; 31%) and 5 (4%) remained neutral (Figure 3).

Knowledge and exposure to ANP/CNS nursing services

When asked about exposure to ANP/CNS services, not all respondents who completed the survey answered this question, with 106 of the 110 who completed the survey responding: 67/106 (63%) strongly agreed with the statement, 36/106 (34%) agreed and 3/106 (3%) were neutral. Regarding the relevance of the knowledge gained from NGR to the respondents' current role, 107 participants responded, 46 (44%) strongly agreed, 47 (43%) agreed, 13 (12%) were neutral and 1 person (1%) disagreed (Figure 4).

Staff development, sharing knowledge and own role expansion

When asked, 'I would recommend NGR to colleagues', all 110 respondents answered, all either strongly agreeing ($n=97$; 88%) or agreeing ($n=13$; 12%). In response to the question 'Nursing Grand Rounds would encourage me to present at future nursing grand rounds', all 110 responded: 45 (41%) strongly agreed, 41 (37%) agreed and 24 (22%) were neutral.

Discussion

Attendance at nursing grand rounds

Nursing grand rounds are open to all staff in the organisation with a focus on nursing. In person sign-in role information was available for 10 sessions, showing that staff across a broad range of roles have attended, with student nurses being the biggest single group (115/391; 29%) and ANP/ANP candidates comprising 19% (76/391) of attendees (in Ireland, RANP [registered ANP] is a registered title and trainee ANPs are referred to as candidates until they are registered by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) (ONMSD, 2020a). It is clear that the staff nurses, making up the leading proportion of the nursing workforce, were unfortunately not in a position to attend NGR, accounting for only 3% ($n=11/391$) of all who signed in.

Based on local ward feedback, the authors suspect that this is a multifactorial issue. Known barriers to NGR attendance include the demands of the clinical area (Gardner et al, 2010), location of NGR, time to attend (Odera and Hitchcock, 2012), and support for CPD (Mlambo et al, 2021). To enable more staff nurses to attend, the NGR committee advertises NGR a few days before each session on the 'screen saver' of the hospital computers and hands out flyers to ward managers to enable advance planning around staffing.

Logistically, in a post-pandemic environment within a large healthcare setting (the hospital spans 31 acres and has several satellite centres as part of the main campus), identifying a suitable venue was invariably the most challenging component of organising NGR. This has been achieved through an ongoing commitment to schedule NGR in the same location, at the same time, on the same day each month, even in the context of demanding clinical schedules, with the majority of respondents agreeing that the venue and scheduling was appropriate. The

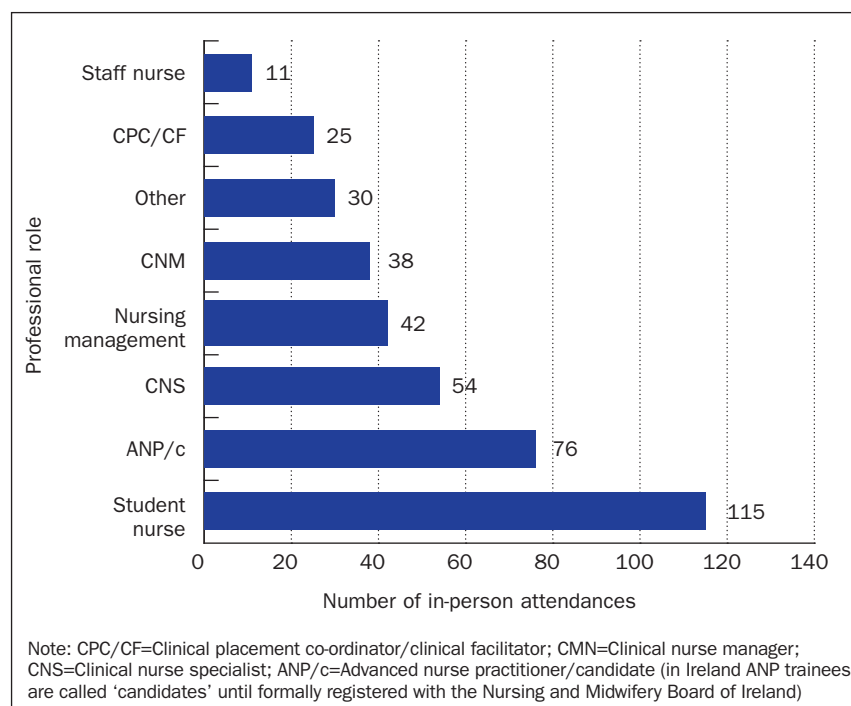


Figure 1. Bar chart showing numbers for nursing grand rounds sign-in by professional role of in-person attendees ($n=391$), over 10 sessions

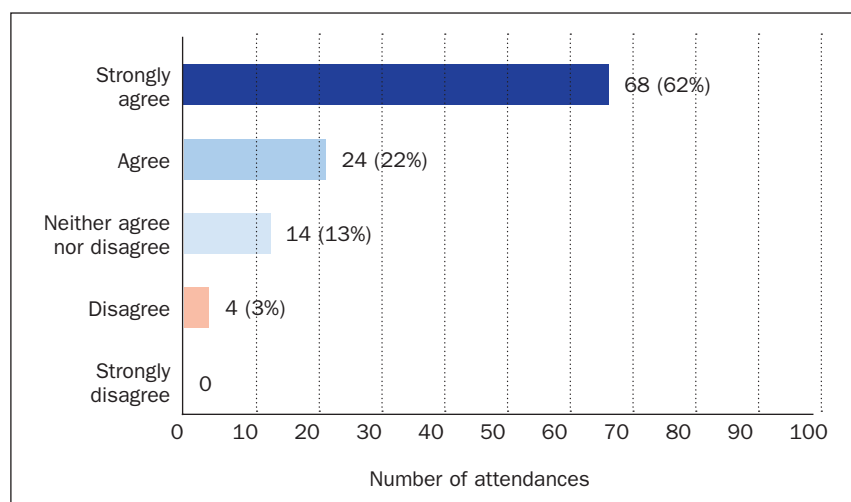


Figure 2. Bar chart showing survey participant ($n=110$) responses to the statement: 'I was supported by my line manager to attend Grand Rounds today'

NGR sessions are also hosted live online with consent from all stakeholders, and a link is made available via a dedicated email in advance of the scheduled event. The concomitant use of an online platform to host the sessions has facilitated a greater attendance – attendance in person is optional and the virtual option is available to view online for 3 months after the NGR. The virtual option has the potential to encourage regional education within the wider hospital group, attracting larger audiences (Nieuwoudt, 2020). Further study would be required to evaluate reasons for non-attendance; however, the team has made some suggestions at ward level such as supplying the virtual option to ward managers.

In contrast to staff nurse attendance, it is encouraging to

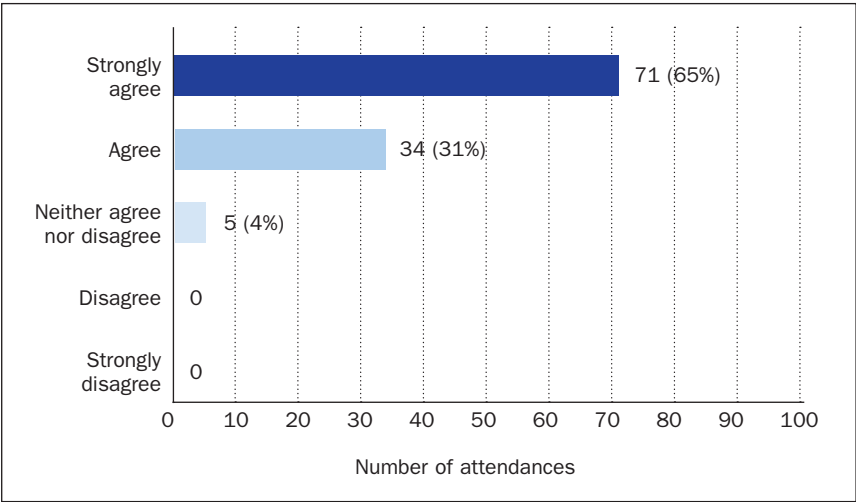


Figure 3. Bar chart showing survey participant (n=110) responses to the statement: ‘Nursing Grand Rounds will influence my collaboration with ANPs/CNSs in delivering patient care’

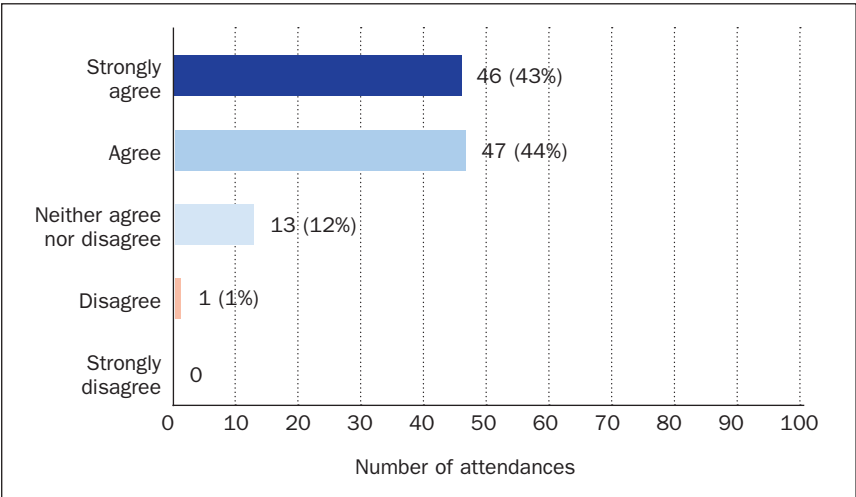


Figure 4. Bar chart showing survey participant (n=107) responses to the statement: ‘The knowledge I have obtained during Nursing Grand Rounds is relevant to my current role’

see student nurses well represented at NGR. This is in some part due to a member of nurse practice development being involved in the NGR organising committee to prioritise NGR attendance for student nurses. Toothaker et al (2022) illuminated several challenges that new nurse graduates encounter, including a lack of confidence, inadequate clinical or theoretical preparation, unrealistic organisation demands and an absence of support systems. The attendance by student nurses enables undergraduate nurses to meet with and interact with senior nursing leaders in both clinical and management roles, thereby reducing intraprofessional barriers (Walter and Terry, 2021). NGR can support and enable undergraduates to engage in education and information about career pathways in a way that is supportive and accessible. The authors are hopeful that NGR is having a positive impact on student nurses – the potential ANPs and CNSs of the future – as this platform enables the student cohort to observe ANP and CNS

leadership in action, facilitating exposure to advanced skill sets within a professional collaborative framework.

Nursing management support

Nursing management support is vital for the success of a new educational initiative. Walter and Terry (2021), in a systematic review of CPD engagement, suggested that a nurse manager’s influence was pivotal and nurses who were supported with their CPD felt professionally valued. In the authors’ centre it is evident that NGR has been very well supported by the director of nursing, with a good attendance from assistant director level at each session, and only 3% of respondents feeling unsupported by their line manager to attend. The NGR model is now embedded in the local nursing strategy as a component of ‘Learning, QI, Innovation and Research’ (Tallaght University Hospital, 2022)

Intraprofessional collaboration and removing professional barriers

Intraprofessional nursing collaboration is described as the interaction between nursing members (Ibraheem et al, 2020). Salinas et al (2019) demonstrated that NGR improved interdisciplinary teamwork but there is little evidence regarding NGR influencing nursing collaboration and removing perceived role barriers. Nursing is a multifaceted profession in Ireland with many different grades, roles and specialist titles. Advanced practice nursing is defined as ‘a career pathway for registered nurses, committed to continuing professional development and clinical supervision, to practice at a higher level of capability as independent, autonomous, and expert practitioners’ (NMBI 2017:15), whereas CNSs are clinical experts within a specific area (either a clinical area or in relation to a clinical condition) (ONMSD, 2023). Horizontal resistance from nursing peers can be described as a ‘perceived lack of understanding of the ANP role’ among nurses and has been recognised in the Irish setting (Ryder et al, 2019:2655); however, all respondents said that NGR had provided a better understanding of the roles of CNS and ANP.

The outcomes of nursing collaboration are improvements in patient care (Ibraheem et al, 2020), and the majority of respondents strongly agreed that NGR will positively influence collaboration with ANPs/CNSs in delivering patient care, meeting the stated aim of the NGR programme: ‘To promote an increased understanding of the roles of clinical nurse specialist and advanced nurse practitioner, therefore nurturing the concept of progression within nursing roles.’ Although NGR is nurse led and focuses on nursing roles and caseload, interprofessional collaboration is key to patient care. Often other health professionals do not understand the different nursing roles (Elliott et al, 2024) and NGR has the potential to be a forum for breaking down interprofessional boundaries. NGR sessions are open to all staff in the organisation.

Staff nurses traditionally make up the largest proportion of nursing roles and, as stated, were poor attenders at these NGR sessions. Barriers to learning can include time limitations, or a lack of manager support and peer support (Santos, 2012). This analysis did not set out to explore the reasons staff nurses did not avail themselves of NGR and further evaluation locally is

Box 3. A selection of nursing specialties and topics presented at nursing grand rounds

- Age-related health care
- Bone health
- Integrated community chest pain service
- Chronic pain management
- Critical care outreach
- Dementia
- Dementia in intellectual disability
- Dermatology
- Emergency care
- Endometriosis
- Falls
- Gerontology emergency department initiative (GEDI)
- Headache
- Integrated heart failure
- Interventional radiology
- Memory
- Nursing home liaison
- Oncology
- Research
- Sepsis
- Stoma care
- Stroke
- Urology
- Vascular

warranted. Vázquez-Calatayud et al (2021) suggested that reasons for nurses' non-attendance at CPD are under-studied. Support from nursing leadership and peer support for NGR at this site is evident from this study and, in contrast to the findings of Odera and Hitchcock (2012), very encouraging.

Exposure to nursing services/knowledge

The mission of Tallaght University Hospitals Centre for Learning and Development is 'to provide lifelong learning to all who work in a healthcare environment that is relevant, comprehensive and in keeping with evidence-based practice to enhance patient and client care' (Tallaght University Hospitals, 2023). A wide variety of nursing specialties have presented to date (Box 3) and the majority of respondents have obtained knowledge relevant to their clinical role (Figure 4), with 86% ($n=93/107$) being exposed to new nursing services.

The 'theory' of nursing can be seen as having moved to a classroom setting (Stroehlein and Spencer, 2020) with little time for bedside or direct teaching, thereby increasing the emphasis on textbooks and research. At the bedside there is often little time to embrace difficult roles and understand the role of specialist nursing. Through NGR, experts can showcase nursing roles and best practice to colleagues, using case studies to improve critical thinking, promote staff development and improve work satisfaction. In the context of professional knowledge development, NGR offers an efficient method of integrating CPD into the regular routines of nursing staff (Carney et al, 2024). The NGR platform acted as a conduit for developing innovative and continuous improvement culture in nursing practice, while also functioning to maintain and enhance skills and feedback. Feedback from participants indicates that participating in the

NGR programme facilitated the implementation of novel, evidence-based interventions within the practice environment. Creating learning conditions such as grand rounds fosters inquiry and collaboration, which is essential for professional development in a dynamic healthcare sector (Dowling et al, 2021). The provision of opportunities for nurses to explore complex issues in a supportive collegial environment enhances care interventions and ultimately improves patient outcomes. This also aligns with the broader goals of evidence-based practice and continuous quality improvement in healthcare delivery.

Role expansion and development

The roles of nurses and midwives in Ireland have developed significantly since the launch of the *Strategic Framework for role Expansion of Nurses and Midwives: Promoting Quality Patient Care* (Department of Health and Children, 2011), this includes nurse prescribing of medications (ONMSD, 2020b), referral for radiological procedures (ONMSD, 2020c) and the national expansion of the percentage of the nursing workforce at ANP level (ONMSD, 2020a). These enhanced roles have occurred through expansion of the staff nurse/midwife and the introduction of the clinical nurse/midwife specialist and the advanced nurse/midwife practitioner roles. Continuing professional education is essential to such role enhancement and it has been suggested that using the expertise of experienced nurses enables education between experienced and novice nurses (Gardner et al, 2010). The NGR model provides an ideal opportunity for nurses to learn about career pathway options, exchange ideas and encourage role expansion and provides an opportunity to think about career options and roles and personal professional growth. The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) standard three of advance practice (NMBI, 2017:17) states that ANPs will 'educate others using an advanced expert knowledge base derived from clinical experience'; similarly a CNS core competency is 'education and training' (ONMSD, 2023). Those who did respond to the post-NGR survey said they had recommended NGR to their colleagues as a continuing learning opportunity.

NGR has been shown to have a positive impact on clinical decision making (Valizadeh et al, 2019). Nurses listen to discussions of best practice and case studies presented by the speakers, exposing attendees to a variety of cases and the nursing management involved, and they can apply it to their own practice. Public speaking skills are vital in nursing, from presenting in a meeting or conference, to voicing an opinion during a ward round (Wati et al, 2021). As well as sharing knowledge of clinical services provided, the development of skills such as presentation and chairing roles are supported. Presenting to a large audience is an experience that many nurses can be fearful of, however, for the novice speaker NGR can be a friendly forum to develop their skills (Carney et al, 2024). Within the committee, members have supported each other to learn how to plan and organise each session and offer presentation guidelines and support. Although most participants indicated they would be encouraged to present at future nursing grand rounds, fulfilling the objective of facilitating peer-to-peer support among nurses to enhance their skillsets, nearly a quarter

of respondents remained undecided. Additional encouragement and support may be necessary.

Strengths and limitations

This service analysis demonstrates several methodological strengths and limitations. A key strength is the inclusion of specific questions regarding the ANP and CNS roles, not present in previous studies. Although the extant literature has investigated the efficacy of NGR (Carney et al, 2024), this study makes a novel contribution by evaluating the impact of NGR in the Irish healthcare context, thereby addressing a gap in the current body of knowledge.

There were limitations, including a low response rate of 18%; nonetheless, the data collected represent a diverse cross-section of roles among the participants, comprising virtual and in-person attendees (Figure 5), which may somewhat mitigate concerns regarding representativeness.

Timmins et al (2023) suggested that low response rates are not uncommon in survey-based methodologies.

Further limitations are that it was not possible to identify how many individual virtual attendees completed the survey, and what proportion of the ANP group were candidate ANPs. In addition, because the survey was designed with a separate QR code for each session – to include each presentation – it was not possible to ascertain how many respondents attended and/or completed the survey more than once.

Despite these limitations, the overall audit has provided an impetus for future research, especially with a focus on staff nurse attendance, with large sample sizes and potentially longitudinal designs that could build on these findings, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the NGR impact.

Conclusion

NGR as a forum for regular CPD provides a setting to enable nurses learning from nurses. It provides a forum to showcase nursing roles, breakdown intraprofessional barriers, promote evidence-based practice and share experiences and expertise. Having explored the establishment and evaluation of ANP- and CNS-led nursing grand rounds in a large Dublin teaching hospital, the evidence of this service analysis shows that nursing grand rounds can facilitate nurses in role expansion, collaboration and exposure to new nursing services, providing accessible access to local CPD.

NGR supports the hospital's mission to provide lifelong learning to all who work in a healthcare environment and is a lived example of ANPs and CNSs fulfilling the roles core competencies. This NGR programme was recognised with an Irish Healthcare Centre award in 2023 and has been embraced by the organisation. It provides a space to promote professional development, share ideas and examine the numerous integrated pathways available within nursing, both in the hospital but also in collaboration within our community partners. **BJN**

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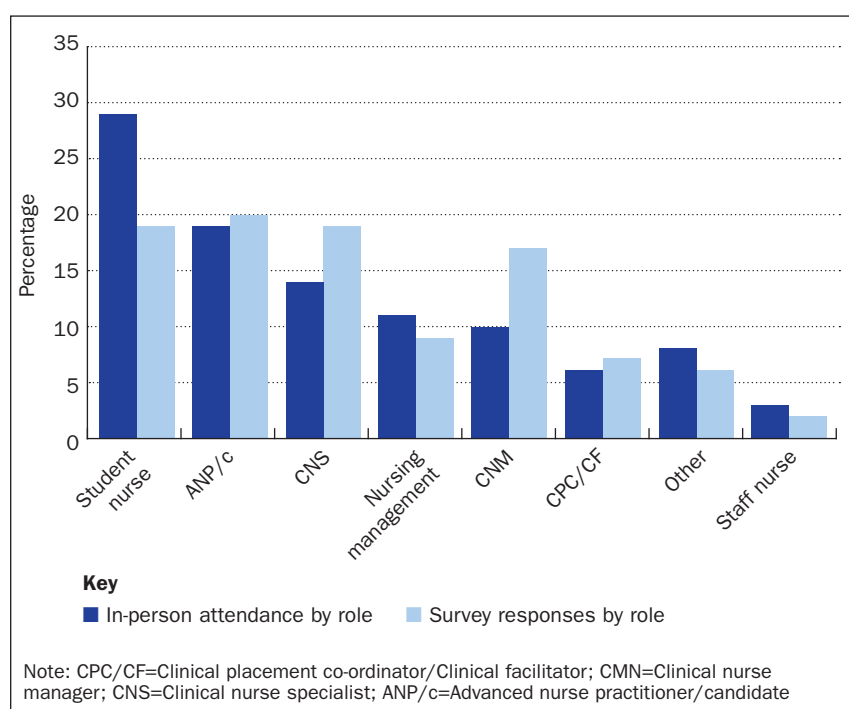


Figure 5. Bar chart comparing share of responses to survey by professional role with share of in-person attendance by role ($n=435$ in-person attendances and $n=110$ completed surveys)

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KEY POINTS

- Nursing grand rounds (NGR) showcases advanced nurse practitioner (ANP) and clinical nurse specialist (CNS) nursing expertise in delivering clinical care
- Collaboration between ANP and CNS roles is vital in delivering an NGR programme
- Nurse manager support for nurse-led continuing professional development is important for the success of NGR and nursing development
- Attendance at NGR has a positive impact on attendees' knowledge of nursing services
- Staff nurses require more support to enable attendance at NGR

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CPD reflective questions

- How do you think you could commence nursing grand rounds in your organisation?
- What benefits would nursing grand rounds bring to your continuing professional development?
- Are you encouraged to collaborate with other nursing roles such as ANP and CNS in delivering patient care?