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Pediatric nurse practitioner transition to practice neurology fellowship

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Since 1965 pediatric nurse practitioners (PNPs) have been an integral member of the primary health care team. Today PNPs practice in diverse settings. PNPs specialize in neurology practice in both primary and acute care settings. With the reduction in resident physician work hours, the shortage of pediatric neurologists, the enactment of health care reform legislation, and a shift to independent practice, PNPs are a viable resource to fill the pediatric neurology provider gap, contain health care costs and improve health care quality. Today's pediatric neurology patients are more medically complex, and care is provided in both inpatient and outpatient settings. The exclusion of specialty care, such as neurology, in the PNP generalist preparation has created a gap between education and specialty pediatric neurology practice. PNPs TTP report feelings of anxiety, fear, uncertainty and being unprepared for the role. A PNP transition to practice neurology fellowship is a way to bridge the gap between generalist education and specialty practice. As NP fellowships programs are just emerging in the U.S., there are a number of issues that we face regarding the organizational structure, cost issues, and curricular design. The time is right for PNPs to provide care to children with neurologic diseases and disorders that are safe, effective, patient centered, timely, and efficient. There is the shortage of neurology providers, 0.89/100,000 physicians and 0.14/100,000 nurses, in the Americas (World Health Organization, 2004). The average wait time for a child to see a pediatric neurologist is 47.6 business days. In 2012, 39% of children's hospitals reported vacancies of 12 months or longer for child neurologists. This presentation will address the emerging role of the PNP neurology fellowship, and describe the focus and challenges of neurology fellowship programs in the U.S. It illustrates the development of one specific program at Texas Children's Hospital and neurology fellowship programs in general.

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