



Short Article

Toward an Advanced Practice Nursing Specialty in Occupational Health: A Public Health Imperative in France

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. The French law of August 2, 2021, recognized the possibility for Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs) to specialize in occupational health. However, the specialization has yet to be implemented despite clear demand from employers and employees. Objective: To review the legislative, professional, and public health context supporting the creation of an APN specialty in occupational health in France.

Methods. A narrative review covering the period 2019–2024 was conducted. Documents were identified through PubMed, ScienceDirect, and government/organizational websites using descriptors including “infirmier en pratique avancée,” “santé au travail,” “occupational health nursing,” and “advanced practice.” Eligibility included official laws, professional guidelines, and peer-reviewed articles directly addressing occupational health nursing or advanced practice.

Results. Five key documents were identified, highlighting the legislative framework, gaps in worker health coverage, and professional readiness. The review underscores the urgent need for APNs specialized in occupational health to expand preventive care and clinical practice.

Conclusions. Establishing an APN specialty in occupational health is consistent with current reforms and responds to significant public health needs.

Keywords: Advanced Practice Nurse; France; Nursing Specialization; Occupational Health; Public Health Policy.

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Introduction

Occupational health is a crucial component of public health policy, aiming to prevent occupational diseases, promote worker well-being, and reduce health inequalities. In France, despite the legal framework provided by the law of August 2, 2021, an official domain of Advanced Practice Nursing (APN) in occupational health has not been implemented (Ministère de la Santé, 2024).

This delay is striking, given the context: thousands of workers remain without systematic occupational health surveillance (Espace Infirmier, 2023). Furthermore, reports from professional associations (SNPST, 2023; GIT & Réseau des Infirmiers en Santé au Travail) show that nurses trained in occupational health through specialized diplomas or master's degrees already play an essential role in prevention and education. Expanding their scope to APN status would allow them to conduct more advanced clinical assessments, manage complex situations, and prescribe targeted preventive interventions.

The literature underlines the benefits of APN roles in improving care coordination, early detection, and access (Rauch, 2020). Therefore, a dedicated APN specialty in occupational health would help align France with international best practices and meet growing demand from employers and employees.

This study aims to review the legislative, professional, and public health context supporting the creation of an APN specialty in occupational health in France.

Methods

Study design

A narrative review was carried out covering the period January 2019 to December 2024. The databases used were the following sources:

- PubMed
- ScienceDirect
- Official sites: Ministère de la Santé, SNPST, GIT

The search strategies were built using the following descriptors (in French and English):

- “infirmier en pratique avancée”
- “santé au travail”
- “occupational health nursing”
- “advanced practice”

Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion criteria:

- Laws and official texts regarding APNs or occupational health
- Reports and guidelines from professional organizations
- Peer-reviewed scientific articles addressing occupational health nursing or APN roles

Exclusion criteria:

- Articles unrelated to occupational health or APN
- Publications without full text available

Results

The review identified five main documents (Table 1).

Table 1. Search results

Number	Reference	Type	Key Findings
1	Law of August 2, 2021 (Ministère de la Santé)	Legislation	Authorizes APNs in occupational health but domain not yet created
2	Espace Infirmier article (2023)	Professional press	Highlights absence of APNs in occupational health and existing unmet needs
3	SNPST white paper (2023)	Professional guideline	Proposes structure and competencies for APNs in occupational health
4	Rauch (2020)	Conference paper	Discusses role of nurses in occupational risk prevention
5	ScienceDirect review (2024)	Peer-reviewed article	Recommends new APN domains including occupational health

Discussion

The documents converge on several points:

- Legal foundation exists (Law of 2021), but implementation is lacking.
- Real demand from employers and employees, especially in underserved sectors.
- Professional readiness, with nurses trained through specialized degrees.
- Potential benefits: earlier detection, improved follow-up, better prevention, and interprofessional coordination.

The creation of this APN specialty is therefore both a practical response and a public health opportunity.

Conclusion

The establishment of an APN specialty in occupational health aligns with national reforms and addresses significant gaps in worker health coverage. It would enhance preventive care, clinical management, and public health outcomes in France.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Founding

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