

## Keynote 2

Monday 9th November, 11.45 - 12.15

## The Doctor of Nursing Practice Degree in the U.S. – History & Politics, Problems & Progress

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H. Michael Dreher is a tenured associate professor at Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and is Chair of the Doctoral Nursing Department since 2004. He was the chief creative designer of the Drexel Doctor of Nursing Practice degree – the DrNP, the only clinical research doctor of nursing practice degree (and only true hybrid nursing doctorate) in the country. He is also the architect of the MSN in Innovation in Intra/Entrepreneurship in Advanced Nursing Practice, also the only degree of its kind in the US which just graduated its first student in 2008. In 2007 he instituted the first and only mandatory study abroad program for doctoral nursing students in the US and has sent doctoral students to London and Dublin. He completed a two year postdoc in sleep and respiratory neurobiology in 2003 as the first RN to complete this interdisciplinary sleep fellowship offered by both the School of Medicine and School of Nursing at Penn. He currently serves as Chair of the Pennsylvania Nursing Congress and is a graduate of the University of South Carolina (ADN '84, BSN '88 and MN '91) and Widener University (PhD in Nursing Science, 2000). He currently is under contract to publish three books: *Philosophy of Science for Nursing Practice* (with Dr. Michael Dahnke), *Role Development for Doctoral Advanced Nursing Practice* and *Contemporary Legal Issues Confronting Nursing Faculty: A Case Study Approach* (both with Dr. Mary Ellen Smith Glasgow), all to be published in 2010 and 2011.

**The History & Politics:** The new doctor of nursing practice degree in the United States is a new and remarkable phenomenon. With the first doctor of nursing practice degree model (DNP) only founded in 2001, and the first real trend of new programs opening modestly in 2005 (with 6 DNP and 2 DrNP programs), there are now some 92 degree programs currently in operation. By the end of 2009 some 196 total DNP programs are planned, far surpassing the projected total

131 PhD in Nursing/Nursing Science programs! Why did this happen and how has this happened so fast – this rush to a professional/practice doctorate in nursing? This paper will explore the historical trajectory of how doctoral nursing education in the U.S. tried to start an early clinical doctorate (DNS or DSN degree) and ultimately failed, tried to initiate an entry level practice doctorate (the ND degree) which turned into a complete collapse of

innovation (with only 4 programs ever founded – and now all closed), and how these experiences in doctoral nursing education have led us to the current doctor of nursing practice degree phenomenon today. What will perhaps make this paper unique is that a political analysis will also be offered, as this author was privileged to have studied professional/practice doctoral nursing education intensely since 2000. The author was even granted an entire year by the Dean to exclusively study and implement an innovative doctor of nursing practice degree model that was different from the degree model endorsed by one of the two leading accrediting agencies (CCNE) for higher degree nursing education programs. Sadly, the political arguments that have shaped the evolution of doctoral nursing education in the U.S. have been largely minimized, sanitized or simply avoided. However, political discussions surrounding the economics of the founding of any new professional/practice doctorate in the health professions today have enormous import. With a global recession upon us, where governments or a private sector must pay for health care services by any new doctoral advanced practice practitioner or clinician, discussions of politics and their implications cannot be neglected. The first part of this paper will address how these contexts are critical to projecting this degree's future.

**Problems and Progress:** Excluding the first generation aforementioned ND degree, the first successful second generation nursing professional/practice doctorate in the U.S., the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree, was established in 2001 at the University of Kentucky. It would take three years (2004), however, before this new prototype nursing practice doctorate would be adopted by other schools. Two of the early adopters were Columbia University and Drexel University, who both developed alternative Doctor of Nursing Practice degrees in early 2005 with the initials 'DrNP' rather than 'DNP.' Since October 2004, when the American Association of Colleges of Nursing voted very narrowly to require the DNP for entry level into advanced practice nursing by 2015 rather than the MSN degree, some 80 schools have established the DNP degree. Even Columbia converted their degree to the DNP in 2008 chiefly for accreditation reasons. Drexel, however, has declined to fully endorse a completely non-research professional/practice doctorate for the discipline of nursing. Instead we have offered the first *hybrid doctorate* in nursing – which *combines both clinical practice and clinical research*, but does not abandon the empirical research enterprise. Instead the hybrid doctorate model merely downsizes the research emphasis of the PhD degree to focus on the generation of practical, highly focused, empirical clinical research. From the beginning our faculty felt a

discipline desperate for more evidence would not be well served (and perhaps even harmed) by a new doctorate that excluded the generation of empirical research. What has transpired over 5 years are now 5 largely unresolved issues: 1) controversy over the mandate that the DNP degree not require an empirical research project or dissertation; 2) disagreement over the required number of clinical hours necessary for the degree; 3) controversy over the mandate that the DNP degree not formally prepare educators; 4) a burgeoning discussion over whether PhD and DNP students should share any common coursework; and 5) different perspectives and requirements by the two accrediting bodies for nursing programs in the US (CCNE & NLNAC). In order to best describe the current status and progress of the practice nursing doctorate in the US, this paper will highlight why these 5 unresolved issues/problems have become so controversial. This paper will describe some solutions that have been proffered by the doctoral nursing faculty at our university and by other scholars who decry what one dean (and others) have called this 'rush to conformity.' Despite the plethora of new DNP programs, the outcome data is not yet in, and the permanent position and place of the doctor of nursing practice graduate in the US health care system has yet to be firmly established.