Interprofessional collaboration in Swiss primary care: the role of advanced practice nurses

A mixed-methods approach: part II & III

Principal Investigator: Stefan Essig and Christoph Merlo, Institute of Primary and Community Care Luzern

Responsible PhD student: Stefan Gysin, Institute of Primary and Community Care Luzern

Partner: Rahel Meier, Institute of Primary Care Zürich

1. Background and relevance

Traditionally, Swiss primary care has almost exclusively relied on general practitioners (GPs). In recent years, a lack of GPs in rural areas, declining number of home visits and an ageing population with multiple chronic conditions have asked for new models of care such as interprofessional teams with nurses in advanced roles, so-called advanced practice nurses (APNs). APNs are well established in the Anglo-Saxon and Nordic countries and studies on them have shown promising results. In Switzerland, however, APNs are new, not yet legally recognized health professionals and there are only a handful of ongoing pilot projects. Hence, it is unclear whether APNs can help tackling the challenges in primary care and data collection appears challenging due to the novelty of the role.

2. Aims and objectives

We aim to provide data from practice on:
- first experiences from APNs and GPs when introducing the APN role to Swiss primary care
- the APN's autonomy and number of APN home visits
- APN patient characteristics and consultation data

3. Methods

Part I
We conducted interviews and focus groups with APNs and GPs from all ongoing pilot projects in German-speaking Switzerland between 2017 and 2018. Data analysis followed Fereday's hybrid approach of thematic analysis and was guided by the PEPPA Plus framework.

Part II
In collaboration with the Institute of Primary Care in Zurich, we use a coding system within FIRE ("**F**amily medicine **I**CPC **R**esearch using **E**lectronic medical records") to identify the APN and collect data on the number of home visits and autonomy. Autonomy is measured by using an adapted version of the levels of supervision from WHM (continuing education of young GPs).

Part III
We are collecting patient data (age, gender, multimorbidity and polypharmacy) and data on activities during consultations (measuring blood pressure, pulse, weight and height, ordering laboratory, prescribing or changing medications) of APNs and GPs using FIRE.