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Title: Interprofessional Collaboration and the Role of Nurse Practitioners in Swiss Primary Care - How to collect and analyze relevant data

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Abstract

Background

Retiring general practitioners (GP), a lack of young successors, and an increasing demand due to an ageing population create a shortage of workforce in Swiss primary care. Reinforcement of interprofessional collaboration could counteract this trend. Internationally, the employment of nurse practitioners (NP) in primary care has shown promising results. In Switzerland, pioneer work is ongoing and a clear role of NPs is not yet determined. There is no tariff to reimburse services performed by NPs, it is unclear which tasks can be performed by NPs independently of a GP and what additional values for the patients result from this new model.

Aim

To collect and analyze valid data during pilot projects in order to determine the role and impact of NPs in Swiss primary care. A promising model can then be implemented throughout Switzerland.

Methods

We use mixed-methods research in pilot projects of rural family practices (currently in Bürglen and Bauma). We gather data from health insurances, trust centers and electronic medical records (EMR) to quantify the level of independence of NPs. In addition, we conduct interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders (health professionals, patients and experts) to assess expectations, satisfaction and billing options of this new role. For the implementation process, policy briefs and stakeholder dialogues are planned.

Results

Preliminary results show that levels of supervision are difficult to unambiguously specify. Interviews revealed that expectations regarding the role of NPs considerably vary among involved persons but change over time. Additional value for patients due to the nursing expertise of NPs are not adequately reflected in existing datasets. Different counterfactual billing methods were established by the family practices.

Conclusion

Established quantitative datasets in primary care are insufficient to determine the role and impact of NPs. Adapted data collections and billing options are necessary.