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New roles in primary care practices; a solution for future healthcare challenges?

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Background & Aim: There is an increasing demand on primary care with ageing population and reforms that shift care from hospitals to the community. These developments fuel the need for new healthcare delivery models. Although care provided by Nurse Practitioners (NPs) has proven to be both effective and safe, the integration of NPs into primary care practice is still challenging. The implementation differs between countries. In countries like the USA, the NP role in primary care is well developed. On the contrary, the role of the NP is relatively new or non-existent in the majority of countries. To facilitate the introduction of NPs in general practices we need more insight in the factors influencing the implementation, and the needs of practice in terms of tasks and responsibilities of NP.

Method: A qualitative design to explore GPs' perspectives on employing and educating NPs within their organization. In 2015, 37 GPs and managers were interviewed. Three main topic areas were covered in the interviews: the decision-making process, arguments to train and employ an NP, and NPs' tasks.

Results: There were three main goals for the GPs to deploy an NP. The primary goal was substitution of care in which GPs want the NP to take over -parts of- their surgery hours. Second, they expect to improve the quality of care due to more monitoring and more time for patients. Lastly, they want to offer more services, most often aimed at prevention or offering specialised care in their practice. Main determinants influencing the implementation include lack of knowledge about the profession and uncertainty about political decisions (including financial systems) regarding the NP.

Conclusion: Results give insight in GPs' perspectives about the implementation of the NP in primary care practices and the required preconditions.