

## **Introduction of a Nurse Specialist for Communication - A qualitative study of German nurses' expectations of new nursing roles**

### **Abstract**

**Introduction:** In light of the upcoming period of structural change in German nursing through newly emerging advanced practice nurses and nurse specialist into the German health system, a lot of confusion and lack of clarity still seem to exist about what exactly these nurses' roles in the German health system can be. Embedded in a project to improve communication and healthcare for lung cancer patients with limited life prognosis at the Hospital for Thoracic Diseases at the University Hospital of Heidelberg, a new role as 'Nurse Specialist for Communication' will be implemented. The aim of this study was to explore nurses' expectations of this new nursing role.

**Methods:** Qualitative data were collected during July and August 2017 using problem-centred interviews and a semi-structured interview guide. 12 Interviews were conducted with nurses working at the Hospital for Thoracic Diseases, Heidelberg, until saturation of data was reached. Data were analysed using Framework Analysis.

**Results:** Overarching themes emerging were: 'attitudes towards implementation of a Nurse Specialist for Communication', 'current understanding of role and role development' and 'expectations of a new role'. Attitudes towards the new role of a Nurse Specialist for Communication varied from being positive and seeing the advantage of such a role for patient care to being sceptical about the expected outcome and success of the new role. German nurses seemed to have highly diverse perceptions of their own role in healthcare delivery and of potential future roles. Some nurses perceived their role in a more traditional form as assistants to physicians, while others wished for more advanced roles and professionalisation of the nursing profession in Germany. Qualities of the interprofessional collaboration, a sensible integration of nurses with academic degrees and the willingness of nurses to take responsibility were perceived to be crucial leverages towards both the enhancement of healthcare delivery for patients and the development of the nursing profession in Germany.

**Discussion and Conclusion:** Role clarification in German nursing seems to be increasingly relevant to enhance professional development of nurses, defining their scope of practice and that of future roles. The results can help tailor implementation strategies and educational concepts when introducing the new nursing role.