

'Crossing Boundaries': A Qualitative Study Evaluating the Role of the Advanced Nurse Practitioner in a Specialist Integrated Palliative Care Service in NHS Tayside.

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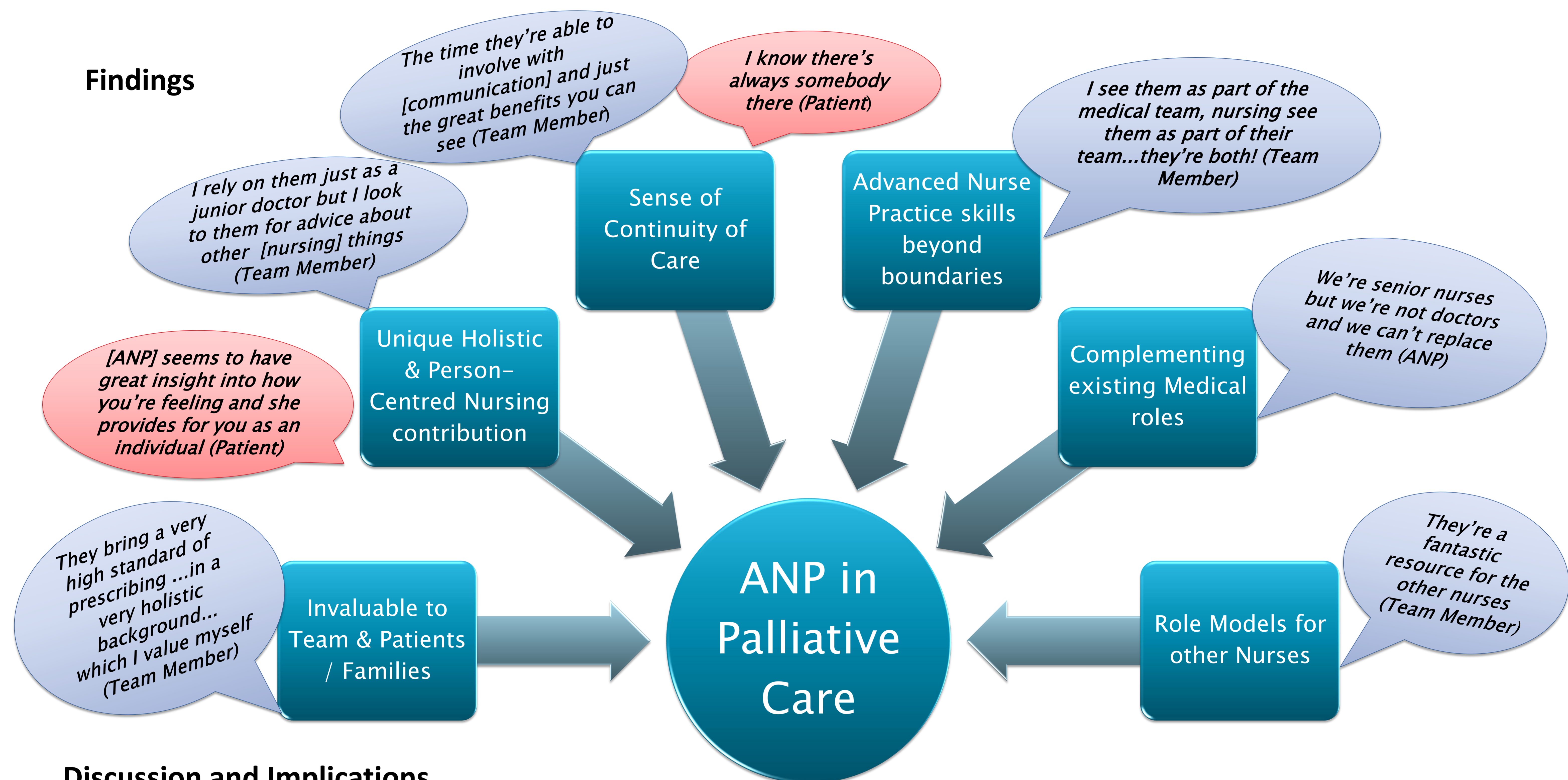
Background

Following international trends, increasing adoption of Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANPs) have occurred in the United Kingdom (UK) in the face of economic drives towards cost-effectiveness and changes to the regulation of workforce such as junior doctors. However, a range of titles exist and these remain unregulated in the UK. Within a palliative care context, the challenges facing healthcare contexts are well known including elderly population demographics, rising incidences of complex and co-morbid conditions with increasing demands and complex service needs. There is limited research evidence exploring the role of the ANP in a palliative care context. Two ANPs were recently introduced to an integrated specialist palliative care context in NHS Tayside. Through funding from Macmillan Cancer Support Services, an external evaluation was commissioned and undertaken by Edinburgh Napier in order to evaluate the innovative role of the ANP in a palliative care context.

Methods

Qualitative methods were used spanning three phases of data collection amongst key stakeholders in order to capture the contribution and emerging role of the ANPs over ten months from June 2010–March 2011. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Marks & Yardley, 2004) and appreciative enquiry informed the analysis of the data.

Findings



Discussion and Implications

Rather than being negatively defined through medical replacement, the ANPs in this palliative care context were seen to complement existing medical roles, were valuable role models for other nurses and invaluable for patients and families. The clear value by other team members may have facilitated the adoption and introduction of the new roles. Unlike in acute sectors, the adoption of ANPs in the palliative care context were defined not only purely by increased medical or technical skills but rather for a unique nursing contribution characterised by person-centred and holistic care. In addition, the study highlighted that a review of the current role and remit of the ANP role was warranted due to the evolving role and potential for high work load, the importance of developing capacity in other staff through developing additional components of the ANP role (i.e. formal education and further leadership and research/audit). The development of referral criteria to the ANPs may be beneficial.

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