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Exploring the collaboration between primary care nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists in Quebec community health centers

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Legislation supporting Nurse Practitioner (NP) practice has allowed the role to expand in Canada; however the introduction of this new role to health care teams has not always gone smoothly. Since NPs provide direct care to patients and have an expanded clinical role, the literature has indicated that the overlapping nature of their scopes of practice with Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs) are often a source of tension and that at times, they work in competition. On the other hand these two roles are complementary and collaboration between them can provide improved patient-centered primary care services. A focus group was conducted to explore the relationship between these advance practice nurses, working in two community health centers in Quebec, for the purpose of exploring the facilitators and barriers to their intra-professional collaboration. After content analysis, the data from these nurses, 2 NPs and 4 CNSs, indicated that after an initial period of confusion due to a lack of understanding of roles and overlapping scopes, the advanced preparation of the NPs and their constant presence within the team was a strong and comfortable source of support to CNSs' practice. Since the majority of community care in Quebec is offered by CNSs, it is logical to assume that better support from their colleagues would have a direct impact on the primary care services they provide.

Biography

Norma Ponzoni is a Faculty Lecturer at the McGill Ingram School of Nursing, Quebec, Canada. She is the Academic Coordinator for the Nurse Practitioner Programs. She has graduate degrees in Nursing and Education and is completing her PhD in Educational Psychology at McGill. She has several publications in peer-reviewed journals and is nationally and internationally well-known in the area of Nursing Education and Advanced Practice. Her research is focused on primary care and the process by which it can be facilitated and the delivery of professional development to rural regions that make this care possible to isolated populations.

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