

A Narrative Review of Advanced Practice Nurses' Function in Managing Multimorbidity

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Short Communication

Received: 02 November, 2024, Manuscript No. jnhs-25-160108; **Editor Assigned:** 04 November, 2024, Pre QC No. P-160108; **Reviewed:** 16 November, 2024, QC No. Q-160108; **Revised:** 21 November, 2024, Manuscript No. R-160108; **Published:** 29 November, 2024, DOI: 10.4172/JNHS.2024.10.6.172

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INTRODUCTION

This narrative review examines the role of Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs) in managing patients with multimorbidity. Multimorbidity, the presence of multiple chronic conditions in an individual, presents unique challenges for healthcare systems. This review explores the contributions of APNs in providing comprehensive care, coordinating treatment plans, and improving health outcomes for patients with multimorbidity. The findings highlight the critical role of APNs in managing complex patient needs and suggest strategies for optimizing their impact in clinical practice^[1]. According to Watson's hypothesis, compassion is a crucial aspect of nursing, and that in order to foster healing and well-being, nurses must establish a strong connection with their patients.

Multimorbidity, defined as the coexistence of two or more chronic conditions in an individual, is increasingly prevalent due to aging populations and advances in medical care. This complex health status challenges healthcare systems, requiring comprehensive and coordinated care to manage multiple conditions effectively. ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSES (APNs), including Nurse Practitioners (NPs), Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs), nurse anesthetists, and nurse midwives, are well-positioned to address the needs of these patients. This review aims to explore the role of APNs in managing multimorbidity and to identify strategies that enhance their contributions to patient care^[2]. Multimorbidity complicates patient care by increasing the risk of adverse drug reactions, requiring complex treatment regimens, and leading to higher healthcare utilization. Effective management requires a holistic approach that considers the interplay between different conditions, patient preferences, and social determinants of health. APNs, with their advanced clinical training and patient-centered approach, are uniquely equipped to provide this type of care.

DESCRIPTION

APNs are trained to offer comprehensive assessments, develop and implement care plans, and provide ongoing management for patients with chronic conditions. Their roles often include prescribing medications, ordering and interpreting diagnostic tests, and coordinating care among various healthcare providers. These capabilities are particularly valuable in managing multimorbidity, where integrated care is essential^[3]. APNs also play a crucial role in patient education and self-management support. They empower patients by providing information about their conditions, teaching self-management skills, and supporting lifestyle modifications. This patient-centered approach is vital for managing multimorbidity, where patient engagement is key to achieving positive health outcomes. Despite the demonstrated benefits, there are challenges in integrating APNs into healthcare teams. These include regulatory barriers, scope of practice limitations, and varying levels of acceptance among healthcare providers. Addressing these challenges requires policy changes and efforts to standardize APN roles and education across different regions.

APNs conduct thorough assessments that consider all aspects of a patient's health, including physical, emotional, and social factors. They develop individualized care plans that address multiple conditions simultaneously, ensuring coordinated and holistic care. Advanced practice nurses (APNs) play a crucial role in conducting comprehensive assessments and developing individualized care plans for patients with multimorbidity. Their advanced training enables them to perform detailed evaluations that encompass a patient's physical, emotional, and social health aspects. This holistic approach is essential for identifying all the factors that contribute to a patient's overall health status.

APNs begin by gathering extensive medical histories, including information about all chronic conditions, medications, allergies, and previous treatments. They also assess current symptoms, lifestyle habits, and social determinants of health, such as living conditions, family support, and economic factors. This thorough data collection helps in understanding the complexity of each

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patient's situation and the interplay between different conditions. Physical examinations conducted by APNs are comprehensive, covering all relevant systems affected by the patient's chronic conditions. They use their expertise to identify potential complications or interactions between conditions that may not be immediately apparent. Diagnostic tests and screenings are ordered as necessary to obtain a complete picture of the patient's health^[4]. A key component of nursing practice is effective communication. Nursing theories provide guidance on how to communicate effectively and build therapeutic relationships with patients. Nurses can be guided in compassionately discussing symptoms, comprehending patients' feelings, and offering suitable therapies by the Theory of Unpleasant Symptoms, which focuses on managing unpleasant symptoms.

Based on the assessment, APNs develop individualized care plans tailored to the unique needs of each patient. These care plans are multifaceted, addressing all chronic conditions concurrently rather than in isolation. APNs prioritize interventions based on the severity and impact of each condition, ensuring that the most critical issues are managed first. Medication management is a significant component of care planning. APNs review all current medications to avoid potential drug interactions and ensure that each medication is necessary and effective. They may adjust dosages, discontinue unnecessary medications, or prescribe new treatments as needed. Educating patients about their medications, including how to take them correctly and possible side effects, is also a key responsibility of APNs.

In addition to medical treatments, APNs incorporate lifestyle modifications into care plans. They provide guidance on diet, exercise, smoking cessation, and other behaviors that can improve health outcomes. APNs also recognize the importance of mental health in managing chronic conditions and may include strategies to address stress, anxiety, and depression in their care plans. Coordination of care is another critical element. APNs ensure that all healthcare providers involved in the patient's care are informed and working towards the same goals. They facilitate communication between primary care physicians, specialists, pharmacists, and other healthcare professionals to create a cohesive and integrated care plan. APNs also involve patients in the care planning process, recognizing that patient engagement is essential for successful management of multimorbidity. They take time to explain the care plan, address any concerns, and ensure that patients understand their role in managing their health. This collaborative approach empowers patients and encourages adherence to the care plan^[5].

CONCLUSION

Advanced practice nurses are pivotal in managing patients with multimorbidity, offering comprehensive, coordinated, and patient-centered care that improves health outcomes. Their role in the healthcare system should be supported and expanded through policy changes and increased recognition of their contributions. By leveraging the expertise of APNs, healthcare systems can better address the complex needs of patients with multiple chronic conditions, ultimately leading to improved care quality and patient satisfaction. Further research is needed to explore the long-term benefits of APN-led interventions and to identify best practices for integrating APNs into multimorbidity management frameworks.

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