

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore nurse practitioners' experiences of polypharmacy in community dwelling older adults.

Background

- The population of the world is experiencing a rise in the number of senior adults with the number of people over 60 years of age increasing faster than other age groups. The WHO predicts that between 2015 and 2050, the percentage of the world's population over the age of 60 will increase from 12% to 22%.
- As population demographics shift towards an aging adult population, greater medication use is becoming increasingly prevalent in health care. Individuals 65 years of age and older comprise the largest group of consumers of prescription and nonprescription medications.
- Polypharmacy results in increased health care costs, greater consumption of inappropriate medications, decreased medication regimen adherence, financial strains and adverse drug events that may lead to further hospitalization or death.

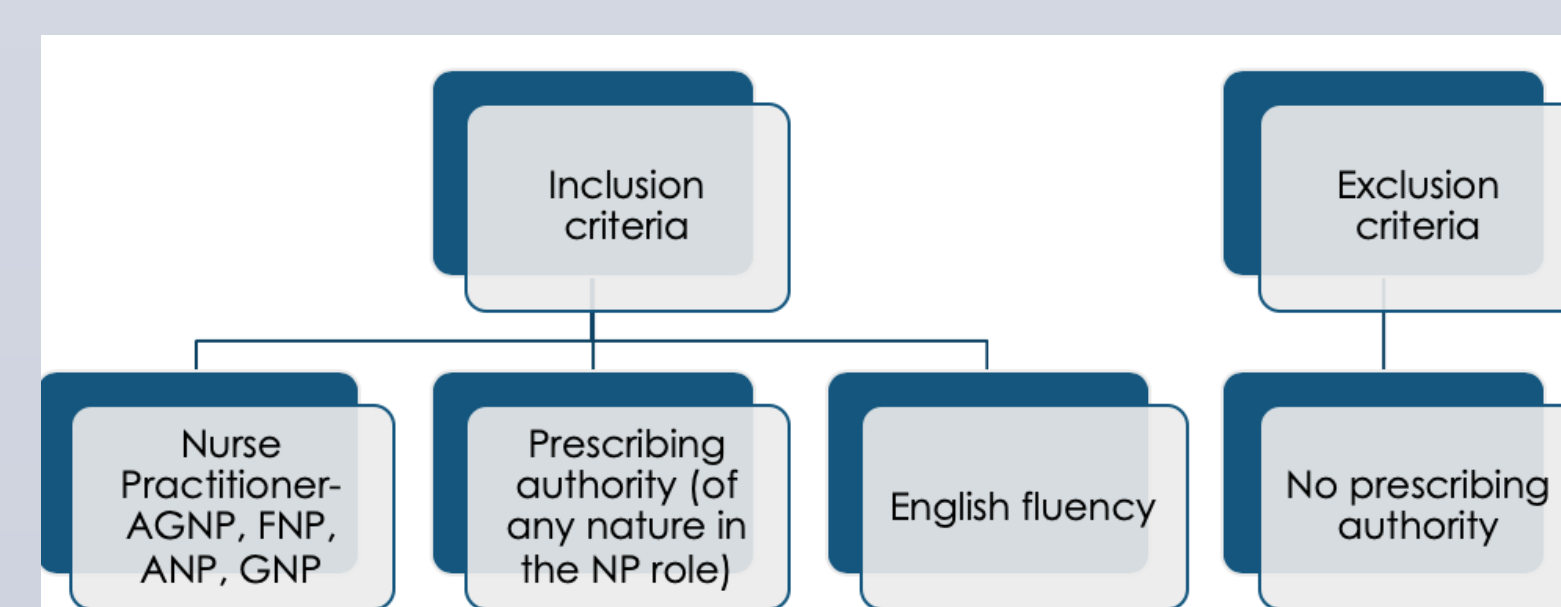
Research Questions

What are nurse practitioners' experiences with polypharmacy in older adults in the primary care setting?

Methods

A qualitative descriptive study was conducted using a purposive sampling of nurse practitioners who care for older adults. Interviews were conducted and data was analyzed for themes. Braun and Clarke's method for thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.

Criteria



Sample

Sample (n=15)	
Identified gender	
Male	1
Female	14
Employment status	
Full time	9
Part time	6
Age	
20-30yrs.	1
31-40 yrs.	5
41-50 yrs.	4
51-60 yrs.	4
61-64 yrs.	1
States practiced	
Connecticut	1
Delaware	1
Illinois	1
Maryland	1
New York	2
Ohio	1
Pennsylvania	7
Virginia	1
Years of practice	
1-5 yrs.	5
6-10 yrs.	4
11-15 yrs.	5
16-20 yrs.	1
Normative practice site	
Primary care	10
Skilled nursing	2
Specialty practice	3
Number of older adults cared for per week	
10	2
15	1
20	4
30	3
40	2
50	2
60-90	1
Confidence in prescribing	
Very confident	13
Completely confident	2

Results

Theme 1: Defining polypharmacy

- Definitions ranged from multiple medications, to the existence of medication interactions, to a particular number of prescriptions, to the relationship to comorbid conditions
- Interlinked defining and identification of polypharmacy
- Lack of knowledge or use of tools or guidelines relating to polypharmacy measurement
- Electronic health record as a method to ease the identification of polypharmacy

Theme 2: Communicating and collaborating with other health care providers and specialists

- The value of collaboration with the pharmacist was noted by participants
- Difficulties with multiple providers
- Importance of the EHRs and the ability to communicate with other health care professionals

Theme 3: Clinical judgement and autonomy of nurse practitioners in relation to polypharmacy

- NPs expressed confidence in their ability to manage/prescribe
- Variety of settings, where NPs practice, impacts decision to seek others for consultation.
- Need to evaluate their patient's health status, medication list, who prescribed the medications, and the risk versus benefit
- Hesitant to de-prescribe if medication prescribed by a specialist

Theme 4: Medication issues of older adults

- Described unique features of caring for aging population
- Described value of a trusting relationship between provider and patient
- Discussed physiological needs and realistic expectations relating to older adults

Implications for Nursing Research

- The replication of similar studies involving pharmacists, and physicians (and any other medication prescribers)
- Further investigation and education aimed at collaboration and utilizing all team members with prescribing or deprescribing
- Inclusion and collaboration with biotechnical and engineering professionals, in conjunction with the health care providers, aimed at developing a better understanding of the needs and usage of EHRs
- Interlinking a measurement tool into a universal medication sector of the EHR
- Future research regarding overall improved prescribing practices, stemming from NP care, can improve how all prescribers care for older adults

Conclusions

- There is limited research regarding NP's and medication management with the goal to reduce inappropriate polypharmacy. This study gathered baseline information to aid future development of nurse-driven research targeting polypharmacy in older adults as well as the impact of nurse practitioners.

References

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp0630a
- Hernandez, J. (2017). Medication management in the older adult: A narrative exploration. *Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners*, 29(4), 186-194. doi: 10.1002/2327-6924.12427
- World Health Organization (2015). World Report on Ageing and Health. Geneva: World Health Organization. Retrieved April 15, 2017 from: <http://www.who.int/ageing/events/world-report-2015>