



General practices as interprofessional communities: the contribution of the practice nurse

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Overview

- Evolution of practice nurses in Australia
- The Australian General Practice Nurses Study
- What do practice nurses do?
- What supports advanced teamwork?
- Towards new models of nursing in general practice

Evolution of practice nurses in Australia

Nurse as small business assistant



From helpmeet to teammate

Nurses in larger practices, broadening of clinical and organisational roles (esp quality)



Practice nursing as distinct
subdiscipline in nursing

Aims of this project

1. To define the roles of nurses in general practice
2. To identify local, structural, and individual factors which determine these roles
3. To identify processes to facilitate change and enhanced practice by nurses in general practice

Methods

Rapid appraisal of 25 practices

- Interviews (36 nurses, 24 GPs, 22 PNs)
- Observation (51 hours)
- Photographs
- Floorplans



One year naturalistic study of 7 practices introducing change

- Small financial incentive, support from Division
- Drivers
- Role of the team
- Role of the nurse



Nursing roles

- Patient carer
- Organiser
- Quality controller
- Problem solver
- Educator
- Agent of connectivity

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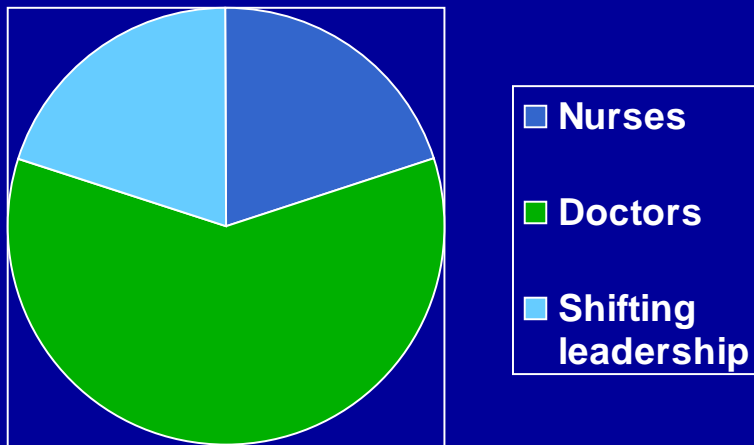
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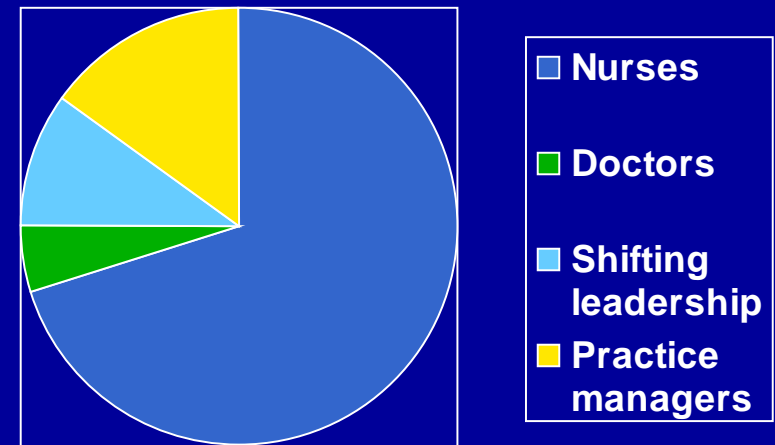
Nurses and doctors as interdisciplinary community

- Nurses and doctors form fluid partnerships around instances of patient care or shared work
- The leadership of these partnerships can be invested in one party, or shared
- Doctor as “leader by definition” rarely articulated

Comparison of models of team leadership in two of the six nursing roles in the Australian General Practice Nursing Study



Patient care: Models of leadership in chronic disease



Quality control: Models of leadership

Drivers for interprofessional working

- Need to focus on nursing autonomy
- Need to focus on depth or scope of activities undertaken by nurses
- Need to support evolution in GP's understanding of the role of nurses

Limited

Hierarchical, rigid
practices

Risk to sustainability
of team

Limited

Advanced

Nurse activity

Risk to safety

Adaptable practices,
interprofessional work

Advanced

Autonomy

Hierarchical, rigid practices

Risk to sustainability of team

Nurse activity

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Adaptable practices, interprofessional work

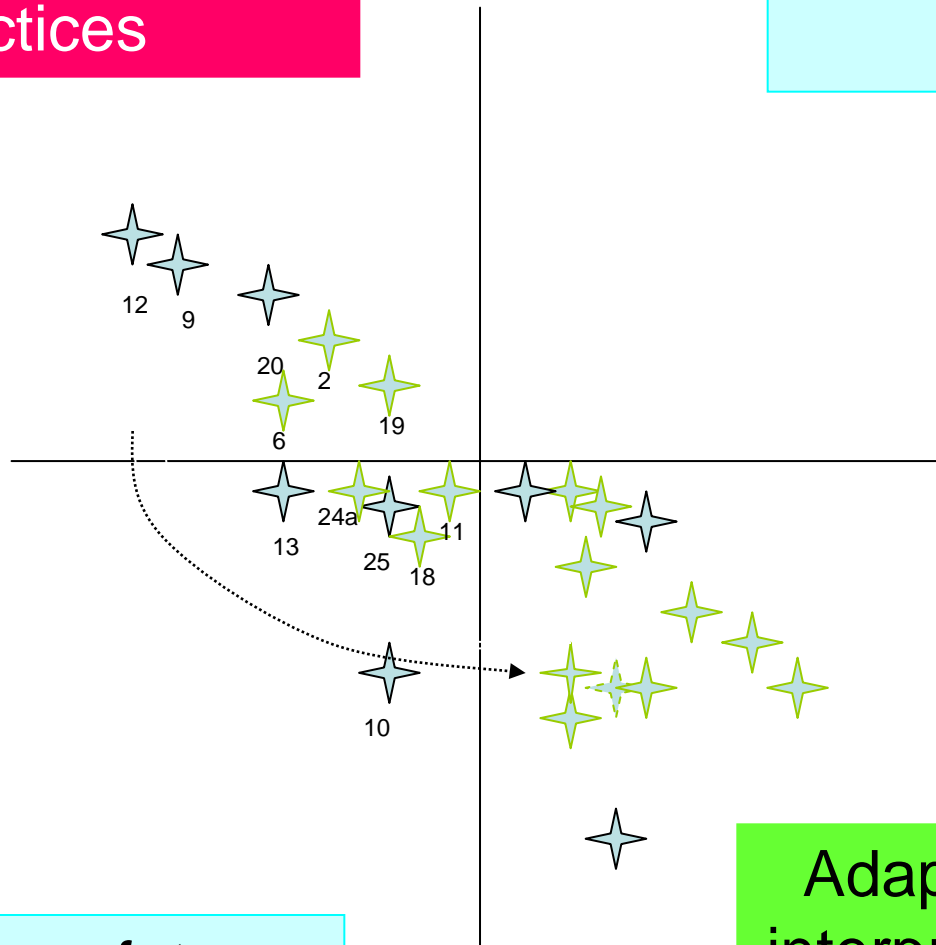
Autonomy



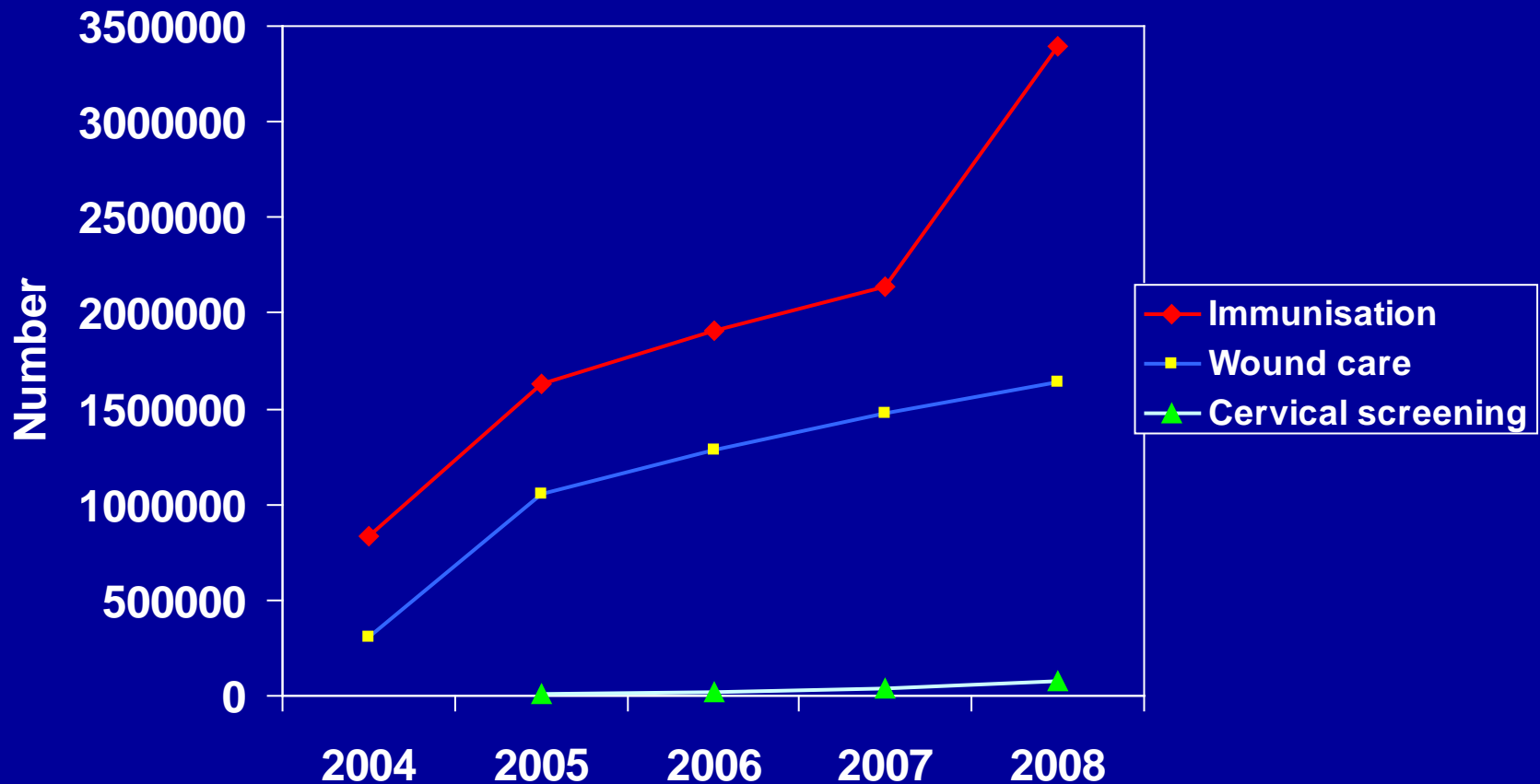
Rural



Urban



Number of practice nurse Medicare items charged per year 2004-2008



Immunisations: Item 10993; Wound care: Item 10996; Cervical screening: Items 10994, 10995, 10998 or 10999

Software can stymie collaboration by...

- Not allowing two people to access a record at the same time
- Not allowing intra-practice communication
- Focusing on doctors' needs, not nurses
- Being unintuitive

Teach a nurse, teach a practice

- Nursing tradition of education in the workplace
- Viewed as a good for others
- Nurses provide on-the-job training to other nurses, and GP registrars
- Nurses educate senior GPs through covert means

A room of one's own?





Ensuring sustainability

1. Training for nurses within the workplace
2. Ensuring breadth or depth of work
3. Managing income disparity within the team
4. Career paths for nursing in general practice

Conclusion

- Nursing in general practice encompasses roles from patient care to general practice connectivity and education
- Evolving interprofessional teams have fluid models of leadership
- Nursing autonomy is key to good interprofessional work
- Drivers are tools, funding, regulation and space, and need careful introduction

“I can honestly say that having a nurse is the single biggest thing that has changed my practice in 30 years”.



Australian General Practice Nurses Study Team

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