

THE PERCEIVED IMPACT ON PATIENT SAFETY AND QUALITY OF CARE OF PHARMACEUTICAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANTS ON NURSING WARDS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Marjan de Graef^(1,2,4), Brecht Serraes⁽⁴⁾, Veronique Van Rompay⁽⁴⁾, Nienke E Dijkstra^(2,3), Eibert R Heerdink^(2,3,5), Tinne Dilles^(1,2)

¹ University of Antwerp, Department of Nursing Science and Midwifery, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Belgium

² NuPhac, Nurse and Pharmaceutical Care Consortium

³ University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, the Netherlands

⁴ Vitaz Hospital and Health Care, Belgium

⁵ Utrecht University, Utrecht Institute for Pharmaceutical Sciences, the Netherlands

Background

Staff shortages challenge nurses to maintain high-quality medication management. To support nurses, pharmaceutical technical assistants (PTAs) have been introduced on nursing wards to dispense medication. Evidence is lacking regarding the perceived impact of pharmaceutical technical assistants on the quality of care and patient safety on nursing wards.

Aim

To explore the meaning of nurses', pharmaceutical technical assistants' and pharmacists' experiences, perspectives and critical success factors when implementing PTAs to support medication dispensation on nursing wards in Belgium.

Methods

- Design: explorative, qualitative study with individual, semi-structured interviews (December 2022 – May 2023)
- Purposive sample (n=28):
 - 9 nurses, 7 head nurses, 10 PTAs and 2 pharmacists.
 - Internal, surgical and geriatric wards.
- Interviews included broad, open-ended questions to invite and encourage participants to openly discuss their perspectives and experiences. Interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was performed.

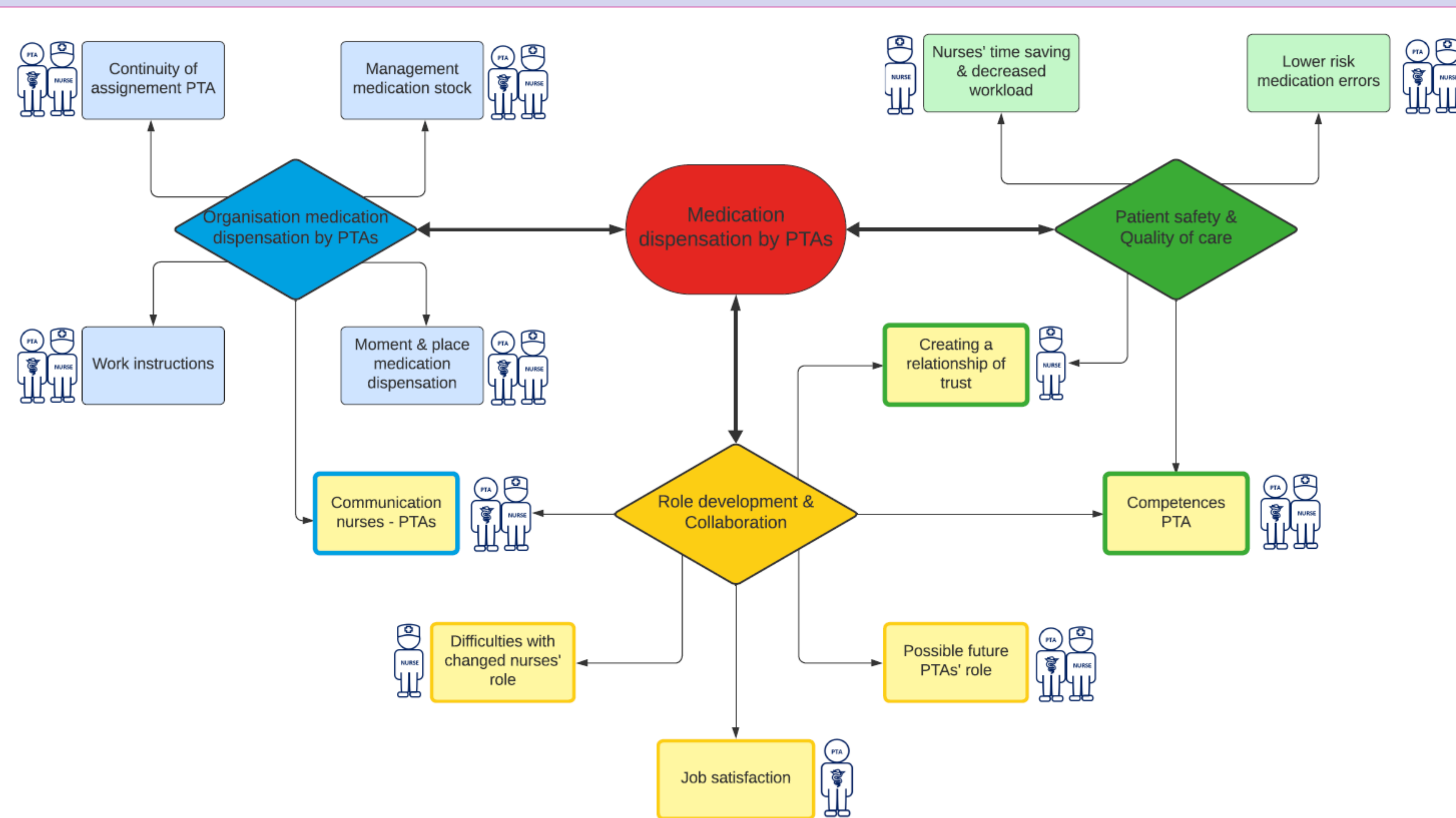
Results

3 main themes

1. Organisation medication dispensation by PTAs
2. Patient safety & quality of care
3. Role development & collaboration

Legend

- Mentioned by nurses, PTAs & pharmacists
- Mentioned by nurses
- Mentioned by PTAs & pharmacists



- Decreased risk of medication errors without compromising care quality
- Reduced nurses' workload for medication management
- Critical success factors:
 - Uniform communication procedure
 - Clear PTAs' role description

- Structurally allocating PTAs to the same hospital wards
 - PTAs becoming part of the team and creating a relationship of trust.
 - Ensuring an optimal collaboration between nurses and PTAs.
 - Enhancing clinical reasoning skills of PTAs.
- Collaboration with PTAs challenges nurses in their role of supervising and co-working in the team.

- The implementation of PTAs on nursing wards is a valuable expansion of their role
- Need for extra training in clinical reasoning skills regarding the patients medication.

Future

- Medication dispensation by PTAs improved the perceived efficiency and safety of patient care on hospital wards.
- The findings of this study enable to refine the implementation process, addressing potential obstacles, and maximize the positive contribution of PTAs in enhancing medication management on hospital wards.
- To provide more insights into the effectiveness of PTAs on the hospital ward, our future study will explore measurable effects, costs and outcomes concerning patient safety and quality of care.

