

Background

In Switzerland, the education regulation of health professions has undergone tremendous transitions in the last few years, especially in the field of nursing. These changes led to a diversification of grades within the nursing profession as well as to the development of new professional profiles. One of the newly introduced profiles is a three-year apprenticeship at the secondary level, the profession of “Assistant-e en soins et santé communautaire” or “Fachpersonen Gesundheit” (ASSC-FAGE). This apprenticeship allows young people, aged of 16 or older, to enter the healthcare system following their standard school curriculum and to graduate after three years of vocational education and training. Although not solely educated for the field of nursing, many of these young professionals are integrated in nursing teams challenging teamwork and collaboration. Additionally new modes of work division have to be developed.

To date, in Switzerland, conceptualizations of work division and integration of the ASSC-FAGE in the field of nursing have been developed in many health care institutions. Unfortunately, only few of them have been published (Brönimann, 2009; Geschwindner, 2009; Ludwig, Mondoux, & Schaefer, 2007). Although teamwork, collaboration and work division between nurses and other healthcare professionals such as physicians or auxiliary nurses, has been investigated in the past, empirical data on the particular teamwork between nurses and ASSC-FAGE are still lacking. Since the new profession ASSC-FAGE was not designed exclusively as an auxiliary to the nursing profession, but becomes the main source of assistive personnel for nurses, it is pivotal that the situation will be systematically explored. To date, the consequences of this new diversity in healthcare teams on teamwork and team’s climate are not clear. Patterns for smooth teamwork and practices for care delivery are unknown and consequences for the educational contents in the training of health care professional as well as the consequences for managerial decisions cannot be drawn.

Therefore, the objectives of the proposed study are:

- To investigate and compare the existing conceptualization of teamwork between these two professional groups in different types of institutions (hospitals, nursing homes, community nursing services) in the Swiss healthcare system.
- Based on empirical observation, to explore and describe the actual division of work between nurses and ASSC-FAGE, delegation processes and teamwork within teams of diverse healthcare institutions.
- To highlight the effects of teamwork and work division on team climate and satisfaction with service delivery.
- To describe different patterns of teamwork which are successful for team climate and service delivery in different clinical fields.

Design

An exploratory, descriptive observational study shall be conducted in the three linguistic areas of Switzerland. For the purpose of this study, the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), the University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland (HES-SO, HEdS La Source in Lausanne), and the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI) shall collaborate to collect and analyze data.

Setting

Institutions of the Swiss healthcare system, in which nurses and ASSC-FAGE work together for at least one year, shall be invited to participate in this study. Acute care hospitals, long term nursing facilities and community care complexes shall be included.

Recruitment

The Swiss Nurse Association (SNA) and Swiss Association of Nursing Directors (SAND), which support the present study, shall recommend that their members participate. A convenient sample of healthcare institutions in which nurses and ASSC-FAGE work together in the nursing team shall be included. Based on the diverse numbers of healthcare institutions in the different language areas, three acute care hospitals, three long-term facilities and three community care complexes shall be enrolled in the German-speaking part, two of each category in the French-speaking respectively one in the Italian speaking part respectively. Within the institution, dyads consisting of a nurse and an ASSC-FAGE shall be asked to be observed during a shift.

Data collection procedures

The study shall encompass three different data collection procedures.

- 1) Written or verbal conceptualizations about ASSC-FAGE’s implementation will be collected. Interviews with the institutions’ stakeholders will be conducted.
- 2) Observation of nurses and ASSC-FAGE in the ward on two separate occasions. The focus of the observation is work division, processes of delegation and teamwork in clinical practice. An observation grid will be used.
- 3) A questionnaire investigating team climate and perceived service delivery shall be distributed to all collaborators at the participating wards.

Analysis

In order to analyze all institutional texts, transcribed interviews and responses to open questions in a questionnaire, descriptive content analysis shall be pursued. Observations shall be analyzed with regard to the proportions and nature of tasks executed by nurses and ASSC-FAGE, to the delegation patterns and to the level of teamwork. Quantitative data of the self-developed questionnaire shall be analyzed with appropriate statistical tests, correlations and explored with multiple linear regression models. Categories shall be built to construct patterns. Comparison within and between institutions shall be conducted.