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Development of advanced roles in Finland - nurse prescribing

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Development of the advanced roles of nurses initiated in 2003 in Finland. Legislation on nurse prescribing came into force in 2010, followed by regulations on postgraduate education in 2011. Nurses in advanced roles provide consultations for patients with non-communicable diseases and acute health problems within multiprofessional teams or in pairs with physicians in health centres and emergency care units. An evaluation report by a national working group appointed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health summarized in 2015 the outcomes of nurse prescribing and changes need to be made. The material was collected by electronic questionnaires from various groups of stakeholders. Furthermore, nurses reported about their daily work during one week and nurses' prescriptions were audited by physicians representing the working group. Results confirmed that nurses were competent to prescribe medication and no risks regarding patient safety came up. This responds well conclusions in an OECD study in 2016. Patients' experiences were very positive. On average, 65% of nurse prescribers, physicians and managers wanted to expand nurse prescribing in their organizations. However, physicians had somewhat more critical views about nurse prescribing. The low number of nurse prescribers was generally judged as an obstacle to gain full potential of the advanced roles. Changes on legislation are being prepared with a view to expand service sectors and medicines regarding nurse prescribing. Advanced roles of nurses are deemed as an essential part of the changing working life and developed in line with the ongoing reform of health care and social welfare.

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