Interprofessional care in South Africa: the expanding role of community pharmacy and the therapeutic alliance with nurses

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In the South African transitional context, the shift in philosophy and structure of health care towards primary health care has been dominating all decisions made by the various health sectors. The aim of this paper is to explore the role expansion of community pharmacy and its therapeutic alliance with nurses as an attempt at interprofessional care aimed to provide primary health care. To gain an in-depth insight into this complex issue a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed. An analysis of innovations such as granting special permits to a select group of pharmacists, as well as the unique therapeutic alliance established with nurses constitutes the core of the paper in which issues such as professional autonomy, as well as boundary disputes between occupations, have been raised in relation to the examples given. The paper demonstrates pharmacy’s thrust towards a more meaningful role by means of changes in legislation, as well as through the partnership between nurse and pharmacist, which allows pharmacists to expand their professional activities without invading the nurses’ professional domain.

Journal of Interprofessional Care
1999, Vol. 13, No. 2, Pages 175-188