

# Nurses in the lead

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# Impact



The studies reported in this dissertation provide insights into available interventions to enhance nurse leadership and the development, implementation and evaluation of a new leadership programme to empower community nurse leadership. This chapter addresses the impact of our studies on science, practice and education. We also describe the societal impact and efforts for further dissemination.

## Scientific impact

The findings of our review emphasise the scarcity of available evidence and underline the importance of researching leadership within the community care setting. This dissertation also provides insight into the characteristics of community nurses and team members in changing their practice and a valid and reliable questionnaire to measure the behaviour and barriers of community care professionals in encouraging functional activities. Our findings led to discussions with editors, reviewers and peer-reviewers of scientific journals about the conceptualisation of community nurse leadership and the scarcity of studies on this topic. The results have been presented and published (inter)nationally, which could have had an impact on the awareness of the importance of community nurse leadership. We believe this could have further motivated other researchers to investigate the operationalisation and implementation of community nurse leadership.

In collaboration with a third community care organisation, the NitL programme was further developed and implemented as part of the funding call 'Verpleging en Verzorging - beschrijven goede voorbeelden (project number 10040012010009)' of ZonMW (The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development). During this project, 10–12 experienced community nurses were trained to implement the programme within their organisations. An extensive NitL train-the-trainer manual was developed and tested, which particularly focused on nurse leadership for coaching and supporting team members as well as clinical reasoning, applying evidence-based practice and advocating the needs of clients. By training community nurse leaders to lead and implement the NitL programme, their professional and didactic expertise was transferred to the participating organisations with the great advantage that the programme was permanently embedded within the organisations. Another call for funding is currently in progress to implement this enhanced NitL programme in practice. The programme will be implemented twice within two community care organisations, for circa 40 community nurses and 400 team members. First, the NitL programme will be implemented in the train-the-trainer form to secure the knowledge and expertise in the organisation, after which the trainers will independently oversee the programme. Finally, a more generic description of the NitL programme will be developed for nurses working in other long-term care sectors, such as nursing home care and mental health care and for other functions (e.g. vocational-trained nurses and social workers).

## Impact on practice development

One can create an impact on practice by actively involving the target group within the research. The NitL programme was developed, implemented and evaluated in close collaboration with the board of community care organisations, community nurses and representatives of clients receiving community care. The needs of the participating community nurses in practice were incorporated to develop our leadership programme. By gathering their views, the programme was made more suitable for practice. This research was initially conducted at the request of the board of two community care organisations, as they found it important to strengthen the leadership role of nurses in practice. Therefore, the findings of our studies were directly embedded into practice. The directors and managers of the care organisations were involved as members of an advisory board to incorporate the developments within the field and their organisations. Client representatives were also members of this advisory board and shared their ideas on our research. These individuals were actively involved in the content development and implementation of our programme.

Over the past years, we led several presentations and discussions about the role and importance of community nurse leadership and the findings of our research. During several presentations for other community care organisations, the NitL programme was introduced to (community) nurses, policy-makers, managers and care directors. This may have helped and inspired professionals of other community care organisations to create a vision and policy on community nurse' leadership and may have helped to recognise the importance of empowering community nurse leadership in practice. As noted above, the NitL programme has been further developed and implemented in collaboration with two additional community care organisations.

## Educational impact

Developing leadership competencies is a continuous process that begins within early nursing education<sup>1</sup>. The findings of this dissertation were integrated into students' education and nursing curricula. We gave many lectures to students of the bachelor of nursing programme at Zuyd University of Applied Sciences, where leadership is embedded as a central theme. We also presented the findings of our studies during symposia, such as for nursing alumni at Zuyd University of Applied Sciences. Further, several students were involved with our research by writing assignments and theses about community nurse leadership. Moreover, we offered a minor, named NitL, to nursing students to strengthen their leadership competencies. This triggered awareness among students on the importance of their (upcoming) role in practice and contributed to the development of their vision on nurse leadership.

Further, a module on nurse leadership was developed for the bachelor of nursing programme dual ouderenzorg at Zuyd University. We organised teaching days on nurse leadership for these students in collaboration with community care

organisations. Moreover, through the development and implementation of the NitL programme within a third community care organisation, we ensure that community nurses are educated, trained and prepared for their leadership role in the context of continuous professional development.

## Societal impact

The important role of community nurses has received major attention in the Netherlands over the past years. For instance, the Dutch National Quality Framework for Community Care<sup>2</sup> was developed to ensure high-quality community care, by focusing amongst others on the important leadership role of community nurses. We believe the findings in this dissertation had an impact on national organisations and institutions. In particular, through our studies, the participating community nurses implemented the content of the Dutch National Quality Framework for Community Care into practice.

Further, since a policy advisor of V&VN (the Dutch Nurses' Association) was involved as a member of the advisory board during our study, the findings of this thesis were directly disseminated to V&VN. The advisory board members helped to create visibility of the project and awareness of community nurse leadership among national professional organisations, such as V&VN. Further, we attended meetings of the Wetenschappelijke Tafel Wijkverpleging, which was initiated in 2019 to generate knowledge and work on the scientific underpinning of community care provision. We attended meetings with community nurses, researchers, educators and policy-makers with a background in community nursing. In this way, we were able to discuss the topic of community nurse leadership and share our findings on its importance for community care. Moreover, we were involved within the European Academy of Nursing Science, which is a scientific community in Europe for collaboration on research in nursing. This platform provided opportunities to discuss community nurse leadership and our findings with other nurse scientists. We were also able to meet with other researchers to develop and promote knowledge on this topic throughout Europe.

## Dissemination of findings

The findings of this dissertation were disseminated in several ways. First, our research was embedded within the Living Lab in Ageing and Long-Term Care located in the southern part of the Netherlands. This Living Lab is a formal multidisciplinary network between Maastricht University, nine long-term care organisations, Gilde Intermediate Vocational Training Institute, VISTA College (secondary vocational education) and Zuyd University of Applied Sciences, all located in the southern part of the Netherlands. The collaboration with these organisations and institutes provided opportunities to share the findings of our research and create awareness on our topic. For instance, the NitL programme was further developed and implemented in collaboration with another

community care organisation involved within the Living Lab. Furthermore, in 2019, a NitL symposium took place to disseminate our findings to the stakeholders involved in our research and other professionals. The symposium was attended by 65 professionals, including approximately 50 community nurses from the organisations affiliated with the Living Lab. Further, a participating organisation held a symposium for employed professionals during which three community nurses involved with our research shared their experiences with NitL and their role in practice.

Moreover, our findings have been shared via various media outlets, such as newsletters from ZonMw (the Netherlands Organization for Health Research and Development). Our results have also been published in three peer-reviewed international scientific journals. Further, we presented our results in the Dutch, practice-oriented journal *TvZ – Verpleegkundige Praktijk en Wetenschap*. We also presented our findings at several scientific national and international conferences, such as the 3rd CARE4 – International Scientific Nursing and Midwifery Congress in Leuven and the 1st International Conference of the German Society of Nursing Science in Berlin.

## References

1. Hamric AB, Spross JA, Hanson CM. Advanced nursing practice: An integrative approach: WB Saunders Company; 2014.
2. Steering Committee National Quality Framework for Community Care (Stuurgroep Kwaliteitskader Wijkverpleging). National Quality Framework for Community Care (Kwaliteitskader Wijkverpleging). 2018.