Polypharmacy is a global epidemic. The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies polypharmacy, the irrational use of medications as a major global problem resulting in wasting of scarce resources and widespread health hazards. A qualitative study used narrative inquiry to explore understanding and meanings of the nurse practitioner’s (NPs) professional experience in managing polypharmacy in primary care. In this study, seeking to understand meaning of NPs with a particular issue, temporality was a central feature. Using the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space during data analysis allowed the researcher to view the temporal aspect of the stored experiences as something that has happened over time and to organize the NPs experiences into temporally meaningful episodes. The personal/social interaction was also important as it centered on what the co-dependency between the two contextualized all aspects of the NPs experience in their practice environments, or place. NP narratives revealed motives, experiences, and actions, and the way they interpret and assign meaning to them in relation to their NP role in managing polypharmacy. Thematic analysis of narratives revealed the complexities of managing polypharmacy and highlighted issues which must be addressed given one in five people will be over age 60 years by 2050, accounting for approximately half of the total growth of the world population.

A qualitative narrative inquiry design was used to explore the personalized meanings NP study participants ascribed to the experience of managing polypharmacy in practice. The metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space provided direction for the researcher to view participants’ experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Purposive and network sampling was used to gather a sample of NPs who self-identified as currently practicing in primary care of adults age 55 years or older, having experience providing care managing polypharmacy, and who speak English. Each participant was allowed to tell their story and direct the flow of the interview in order to fully capture the meaning of the individual’s experience that was important to them. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and field notes were collected during each interview. Field notes were collected during each interview.

Fifteen NPs, 2 male and 13 female, aged 26 to 61 years, were interviewed. All participants were nationally certified, master’s prepared family or adult NPs practicing from 1 to 15 years working 8 to 40 hours weekly. Practice areas included urban and rural clinics. Patient population included self-insured, self-pay, Medicare, and Medicaid.

The aging population signals a shift in research priorities for the country. The National Center for Healthcare Statistics (NCHS) note care of the older adult and medication management are key areas which must influence and shape healthcare research (NCHS, 2015). Nurse practitioners’ (NP) are and will increasingly be facing the challenges of the aging imperative daily in practice. There are many challenges to geriatric pharmacotherapy: more new drugs are available each year, off-label indications are expanding, increasing popularity of herbal, multiple comorbid states, medication cost, and the effects of aging on pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics. This study sought to illuminate the NP experience in caring of the older adult while addressing the complexities of medication management through narrative stories of practice.

**Method**

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**Summary**

The aging population signals a shift in research priorities for the country. The National Center for Healthcare Statistics (NCHS) note care of the older adult and medication management are key areas which must influence and shape healthcare research (NCHS, 2015). Nurse practitioners’ (NP) are and will increasingly be facing the challenges of the aging imperative daily in practice. There are many challenges to geriatric pharmacotherapy: more new drugs are available each year, off-label indications are expanding, increasing popularity of herbal, multiple comorbid states, medication cost, and the effects of aging on pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics. This study sought to illuminate the NP experience in caring of the older adult while addressing the complexities of medication management through narrative stories of practice.