

## Care partner: A concept analysis

Paul N. Bennett, PhD, RN, BN, MHSM, GC(App Stats)<sup>a,b,\*</sup>,  
Wei Wang, PhD, MStats, MBBS<sup>b</sup>, Mel Moore<sup>c</sup>, Cate Nagle, RN, RM, PhD<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Medical Clinical Affairs, Satellite Healthcare, San Jose, CA

<sup>b</sup> School of Nursing and Midwifery, Deakin University, Geelong, Victoria, Australia

<sup>c</sup> Deakin University & Western Health Centre for Nursing Research, Sunshine, Victoria, Australia

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The use of the term care partner has increased, particularly in the chronic disease literature; however, the concept has not been well defined.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this concept analysis was to define and assist nurses to better understand the concept of care partner.

**Methods:** The method by Walker and Avant was used for this literature-based concept analysis.

**Discussion:** Care partnering includes providing assistance to an individual with a health condition to meet their self-care deficits, the commitment to a care partner relationship, and the recognition that people with self-care deficits are care partners contributing to their own care.

**Conclusion:** Emphasizing the care partner dyad in nursing may contribute to improved patient care outcomes both in the acute and chronic settings. It is recommended that nurses view the person with the condition as a contributor and partner in their own care in the context of a larger care partnership.

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### Introduction

People living with acute and chronic conditions frequently require support and assistance with maintaining health and performing activities of daily living. The people providing assistance are frequently spouses, siblings, children, other relatives, or friends (Logsdon et al., 2010). The assistance provided ranges greatly reflecting varying degrees of independence (Sifton, 2004). This assistance results in a dyadic partnership of the person with the condition and the person, or persons, assisting them to achieve their short- and long-term health care goals.

Nonprofessional people providing assistance have been commonly referred to as carers, informal carers,

or caregivers. Although these terms are often relevant and readily understandable, they do not reflect the true nature of the care dyad (Eilers, 2013). The care dyad is the care partnership between the person living with the condition and the people assisting them (Silverstein & Sherman, 2010). The term care partner has been increasingly used to reflect this care partnership concept.

Nursing care is provided to an individual when they do not have the capacity to provide their own care, which manifests a self-care deficit (Orem, 1980). Frequently, this care involves people significant to the nursing care recipient, most typically children, spouses, parents, siblings, or friends. The nurse's expertise in involving this group can significantly influence a care recipient's health outcome (Walker & Dewar, 2001).

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\* Corresponding author: Paul N. Bennett, Medical Clinical Affairs, Satellite Healthcare, 300 Santana Row Suite 300, San Jose, CA 95128.

E-mail address: [p.bennett@deakin.edu.au](mailto:p.bennett@deakin.edu.au) (P.N. Bennett).

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Furthermore, the nurse's understanding of the care recipient and their care partner relationship may enhance or conversely may be a barrier to improved health outcomes. In addition, the care partner may have health needs of their own that may need addressing that influence the care provided (Lyonette & Yardley, 2003). Therefore, the concept of the care partnership may have implications for nurses and nursing care.

The purpose of this concept analysis is to provide a starting point for agreement and disagreement over the use of the term care partner where a recipient of nursing care has a self-care deficit. Guided by Orem's self-care deficit theory (Orem, 1980), the concept of care partner can form a niche emanating from self-care deficit theory (Paley, 1996). It is within this theoretical approach that we have used the concept analysis method by Walker and Avant (1995) to guide this analysis of the concept of care partner.

## Methods

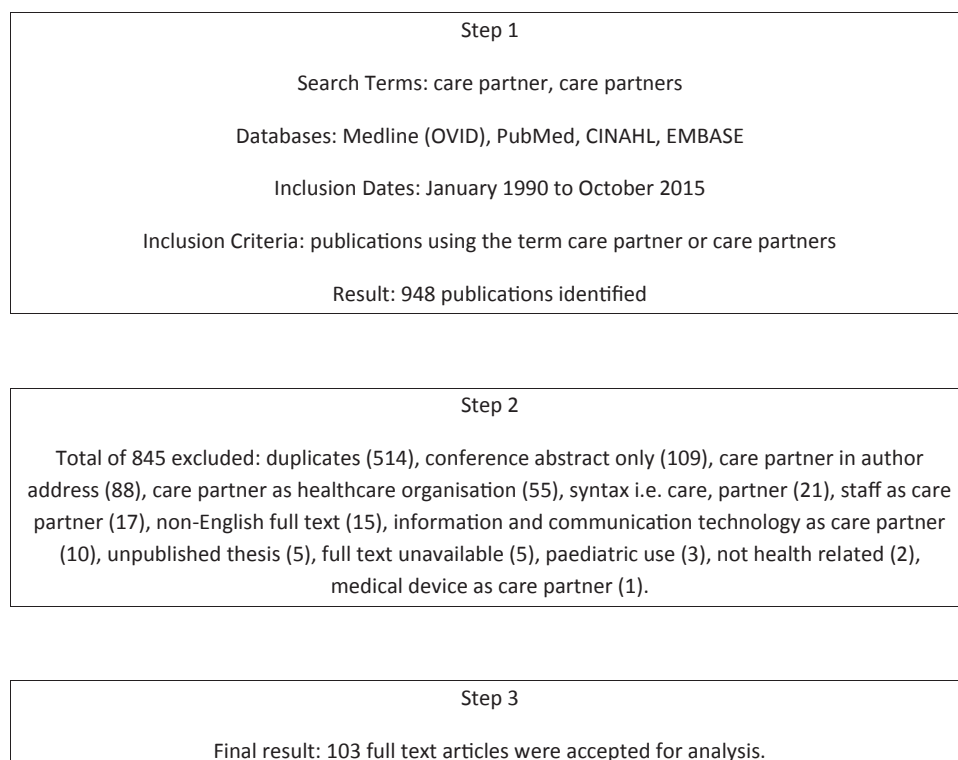
A search of relevant health and medical databases was performed. The databases were EMBASE, MEDLINE, PubMed, and CINAHL. Databases from January 1990 to October 2015 were searched. The search terms "care partner" and "care partners" were used as key words and controlled vocabulary. A total of 948 publications were identified. Further analysis of every publication resulted in 845 exclusions because they

were duplicate publications (514); they were conference abstracts only (109); the term care partner was only used in the author's address (88); the term care partner was a health care organization (55); syntax related (21); the term care partner referred to professional health care staff (17); the full-text publication was not written in English (15); information and communication technology used as care partner (10); they were unpublished theses (5); the full text was unavailable (5); they were used in pediatric context (3); they were not health related (2); and the term care partner was used for a medical device (1). This left a total of 103 full-text titles that were analyzed for this concept analysis (Figure 1).

## Findings

### Definition

The Oxford dictionary provides definitions for both individual terms "care" and "partner." Care is defined as "the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something," whereas partner is defined as "a person who takes part in an undertaking with another or others" (Oxford Dictionary, 2016). The combination of these two definitions results in a care partner being a person who undertakes, with another, the provision of health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone.



**Figure 1 – Literature review methods and results.**

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