

Series (part 44): Professorship of Nursing Science at the Department of Health Services Research at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg

'The aim is to improve nursing care based on evidence'

Faculty VI Medicine and Health Sciences is the youngest faculty at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg. It was founded in 2012 and consists of the Department of Human Medicine, the Department of Medical Physics and Acoustics, the Department of Neurosciences, the Department of Psychology and the Department of Health Services Research. The Department of Health Services Research is currently home to ten departments and two junior research groups. This episode introduces the Professorship of Nursing Science at the Department of Health Services Research, which has been held by Professor Dr Rebecca Palm since 2023.

>> The Professorship of Nursing Science and its department were newly established with the appointment of Rebecca Palm. This makes Oldenburg one of only ten German university medical centres where nursing science is represented. For the professor appointed in 2023, herself a former practising nurse, this is a sign that although the discipline of nursing science is still quite young in Germany, it is developing very dynamically. 'As a still young location for university medicine, Oldenburg offers an excellent professional environment in which to develop academically,' says Rebecca Palm, explaining one of the reasons that led her to the independent city in Lower Saxony, which is the third largest city in the state in terms of population. The professional spectrum here is very broad, so that research projects can be realised in a multidisciplinary way. According to Rebecca Palm, this was also 'an important aspect that greatly influenced my decision to come to Oldenburg'.

Another important, if not the most important reason for her is the new Master's degree programme 'Nursing - Advanced-Nursing Practice', which will start in the



Prof. Dr. Rebecca Palm
has been Professor of Nursing Science at the Department of Health Services Research at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg since 2023.

Stations/career:
1999-2002 Nursing training at the German Heart Centre Berlin
2002-2004 Professional activity as a nurse
2004-2010 Studied nursing science (Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences, Witten/Herdecke University)
2016 Doctorate (Ph.D. nursing science), Witten/Herdecke University
2020-2023 Professor of nursing science with a focus on practice development, Witten/Herdecke University since 2023 Professor of nursing science at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg

winter semester 2024/25 and for which she is responsible. Palm: 'The university is breaking new ground with this Master's programme, which is a challenge that is very exciting and offers numerous opportunities.' This Master's programme prepares nurses who already have a Bachelor's degree for clinical work with extended skills and functions. However, this job profile, which is still very new in Germany and has not been implemented across the board, must first develop because the future areas of responsibility and fields of activity have not yet been clearly described and defined. 'This doesn't make training students easy, but at the same time you can participate and help shape the role in practice,' says Rebecca Palm, explaining one of the challenges. However, in her experience, the representatives of the university hospitals in Oldenburg that she has been able to get to know so far are very open-minded and constructive. This is the best prerequisite for this new role to develop. However, she has also noticed a great deal of interest from medical colleagues so far, which Palm says is 'also very important, as acceptance across all professional groups is an important success factor in the implementation of new professional roles'.

As a former practising nurse and current nursing scientist, Rebecca Palm knows exactly what she is talking about. Her vision is to help shape the development of the profession of 'Advanced Practice Nurse' through the degree programme offered here and to support the implementation of this new role on a scientific basis. Rebecca Palm explains: 'Both processes can only succeed with a participatory approach that involves all stakeholders.' Furthermore, with her scientific work, she would like to contribute to making the important work of advanced practice nurses more visible in order to demonstrate their added value for a sustainable healthcare system on the one hand and to show young people the diverse career development opportunities in nursing on the other. 'I am firmly convinced that we will be able to attract more people to this profession in the future if the areas of responsibility of nursing are more clearly defined and expanded,' adds the young and committed professor. But she also knows the reality: 'We still have a long way to go in Germany - but a Master's degree programme at a university medical faculty is a very important and significant step.' And a step that brings her a little closer to what she says is her most important goal: 'To improve nursing care in a science-based way and to further advance the academisation of the nursing profession.'

This impetus can be explained by her own history. Following her nursing training (1999-2002 at the German Heart Centre Berlin) and subsequent professional career, she studied nursing science at Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences and Witten/Herdecke University. After completing her studies, she worked as a research assistant at the German Centre for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE) in Witten. 'It was there that I built up one of my main areas of research, which I am still pursuing today: the care of people with dementia who display severe challenging behaviour,' explains the professor. In her opinion, research for and with people with dementia must always be interdisciplinary if it is to make an effective contribution to improving practice. Palm continues: 'Health services research brings together all the important disciplines. That's why there was never any question for me that I would get involved in health services research as a nursing scientist and network with other health services researchers.' Incidentally, her first contact with other health services researchers was at the German Congress for Health Services Research, which she has attended regularly since her time as a doctoral student: 'This networking has had a strong influence on my professional career and has helped me move forward.'

At the Department of Health Services Research at the University of Oldenburg, Professor Rebecca Palm is now part of an interdisciplinary team in whicha wide range of disciplines work together: Geriatrics, health economics, outpatient care and pharmacoepidemiology, general medicine, nutrition and functionality in old age, prevention and rehabilitation research, ethics in medicine, assistance systems and medical technology, big data in medicine and artificial intelligence in health. 'In addition to interdisciplinary collaboration, we at the Department of Nursing Science also attach great importance to contributing to disciplinary development in nursing science,' says Rebecca Palm, rounding off the picture: 'Nursing science is still a young discipline in Germany that needs to develop. In order to promote this, the Department of Nursing Science primarily advertises and supervises nursing science qualification theses (Master's and doctorate). Depending on the project context, research assistants come from a nursing profession or are still practising it. This enables a good practice-theory transfer and networking with colleagues from the field. <<

Link
* https://uol.de/pflegewissenschaft



Johanna Seiters MA,
research assistant

>> Why are you studying at the Department of Nursing Science at the Department of Health Services Research?

Through my work at the Chair of Nursing Science, I have the opportunity to work on innovative research topics and help shape

evidence-based, interdisciplinary and holistic care concepts, among other things. As a trained health and nursing professional, the close integration of theory and practice is particularly important to me. By focussing on practice development, this link is put into practice every day at the Department of Nursing Science.

What do you think characterises the Division of Nursing Science at the Department of Health Services Research?

In my opinion, the Department of Health Services Research is characterised in particular by its multidisciplinary and participatory approaches to health care. In my opinion, the Department of Nursing Science in particular is characterised by the special triad of the topics 'Delirium and Dementia', 'Advanced Nursing Practice' and 'Practice Development'. Overall, I find the interdisciplinary collaboration and the exchange between colleagues very enriching.

What topics and issues are you currently working on?

I am currently working on the 'DeliA' project, which is funded by the Innovation Fund, in particular on the topic of 'Delirium in geriatric care facilities'. To this end, our project team is developing an interdisciplinary educational measure that aims to sensitise GPs and nursing staff in geriatric care facilities to the issue of delirium. To this end, we have initially conducted a Delphi survey on curriculum consensus and will review the practicability of the programme at the end of the year as part of a feasibility study.

What would you personally like to achieve with healthcare research?

What particularly appeals to me about healthcare research is the opportunity to help design evidence-based concepts in order to improve existing healthcare models and processes and to contribute to the optimisation of healthcare by developing innovative models. I am also very concerned about transparency and the issue of equity in healthcare, without which I believe good healthcare research would not be possible. <<



Vincent Molitor, MSc,
research assistant

>> Why are you studying at the Department of Nursing Science at the Department of Health Services Research?

I work at the Department of Nursing Science and am responsible for the scientific organisation of the innovation fund project DeliA - Delirium in Elderly Care Facilities, within the framework of which I am also doing my doctorate. My dissertation is dedicated to the design and evaluation of an e-learning programme to promote the delirium-specific expertise of nursing staff and general practitioners in geriatric care facilities. DeliA fits seamlessly into the orientation of the Department of Health Services Research by emphasising the central importance of lived interdisciplinarity, healthy ageing and digitalisation.

In your opinion, what characterises the Division of Nursing Science at the Department of Health Services Research?

The research in our department is strongly application-orientated and promotes an intensive exchange with healthcare facilities in order to always understand current practical problems. This close co-operation is also crucial in the DeliA project and contributes significantly to the high quality of the results.

What topics and issues are you currently working on?

My current research is focussed on the phenomenon of delirium in geriatric care facilities. In addition to developing an educational intervention to sensitise professionals to this nursing and medical emergency, I am particularly interested in understanding and evaluating the mechanisms of action of such complex interventions. In the future, I would like to further explore the realist methodology, which puts the question 'What is effective?' in the background, but rather examines how, why, for whom and under what conditions interventions (do not) work.

What would you personally like to achieve with health services research?

Personally, I endeavour to always think and design healthcare research in a practice-oriented way so that the knowledge gained can be applied in practice in the best possible way in order to sustainably improve the care situation of vulnerable people. I am particularly keen to use my work in healthcare research to help identify and minimise complications and errors in healthcare facilities as early as possible in order to increase patient safety. <<

MVF series 'Healthcare research made in ...'

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What they all have in common is that they harmonise research and teaching and put their heart and soul into doing what healthcare research is really all about: honestly striving to improve people's lives and healthcare a little.

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