

Research for Advanced Practice Nurses: From Evidence to Practice

Although nurses work in a variety of settings, and each carries different responsibilities, the primary goal of any nurse is to provide high-quality care based on the latest evidence obtained through research. Nursing research has a tremendous effect on the current and future nursing practice. However, recent evidence suggests that nurses encounter organizational and individual barriers to research utilization. On the one hand, organizational barriers include lack of access to research, insufficient time to implement new ideas, and others. On the other hand, individual barriers include lack of awareness of research, lack of knowledge of research process, and how to critically analyze research studies (Black, Balneaves, Garossino, Puyat, & Qian, 2015). Given this information, it can be suggested that there is a pressing need to engage nurses in active research and help them understand the basic principles of research. This is because it would help them advance their field and approach each patient in an evidence-based manner, thus offering better patient care. Drawing upon current evidence, this paper discusses the importance of quantitative research in nursing practice, as well as analyzes how nursing research drives the provision of evidence-based care.

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Quantitative Research

Quantitative research, as one of the main types of methodologies, has been broadly used in the nursing field. In essence, this approach allows testing objective theories by collecting and analyzing quantitative data on variables and examining the relationship between those variables. The importance of quantitative research cannot be overestimated as this methodology allows reducing or restructuring a complex problem to a limited number of variables, producing objective, factual, reliable, and generalizable outcome data. One of the main advantages of this approach is that its outcomes are measured easily and can expand into predictions (Esperon, 2017; Ingham-Broomfield, 2015). Given this information, it can be suggested that quantitative research allows investigators to identify the deep nature of realities and the system and structure of its relations, deriving important facts from the results obtained, including differences between groups under study and preference trends.

There are four main types of quantitative research designs, one of which is quasi-experimental research. One of the elements of this design is that it involves the manipulation of independent variables to observe the effect on dependent variables. In other words, quasi-experimental research is used to establish the causality in situations in which investigators cannot randomly assign the subjects under study to groups for various reasons. As a result, differences between groups would be due to chance, which subjects this type of design to concerns regarding internal validity. However, regardless of the design utilized, quantitative research helps healthcare professionals respond to

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changes in patient populations, the healthcare environment, and government regulations, as well as determine effective best practices (Ingham-Broomfield, 2015). Thus, this approach improves patient care, which, in turn, benefits the whole nursing practice.

Research Sampling

In research, a sample is one of the most important factors that determine if the study produces accurate results. By definition, a sample is a subset of the population being studied that is selected for the actual research study. Therefore, sampling can be defined as the process whereby investigators choose their sample. However, this technique is not as straightforward as it may initially seem as there is a set process to help investigators choose a good sample representative of the population. If the research is performed with the wrong sample, investigators will almost certainly get results with questionable external validity, meaning their findings could not be deemed generalizable (Elfil & Negida, 2017). Hence, sampling can have a profound impact on the study outcomes by minimizing errors, avoiding bias, and producing the most objective, accurate, and reliable results.

In quantitative research, there are a few types of sampling, the most straightforward and the purest of which is the simple random sampling strategy. This method is considered the most popular probability sampling technique because every individual has an equal chance of being selected for the actual study. As suggested, such an approach removes bias from the procedure of selection, resulting in representative samples. However, simple random sampling is easy to understand in theory, yet it can be quite difficult to apply it in practice. This is because working with large sample size is associated with certain difficulties that can be challenging to overcome to get a realistic sampling frame. In contrast, non-probability sampling techniques, such as a purposive or judgmental sample, are considered time- and cost-effective methods (Elfil & Negida, 2017). However, as evident from the name of this type of technique, such an approach could have high levels of bias. This bias, in turn, would lead to concerns with a low level of reliability, as well as internal and external validity of research findings.

Credible Nursing Practice

The importance of research for effective, efficient, safe, and high-quality care of patients and their families should not be underestimated. Current evidence confirms that patient outcomes improve when the nursing practice is driven by

an evidence-based approach (Black et al., 2015; Curtis, Fry, Shaban, & Considine, 2016). However, to have such a practice, healthcare professionals need evidence

derived from scholarly methods that together with their knowledge and experience can increase patient safety, reduce healthcare costs, and improve patient outcomes. By informing nursing practice, research creates a critical pathway to cost- and time-effective and practical ways of reducing hospital errors and improving patient outcomes, as well as lays the foundation for comprehensive, evidence-based nursing care (Black et al., 2015; Curtis et al., 2016). Therefore, research utilization in nursing practice is fundamental. This is because it allows healthcare professionals to achieve better care standards, thus fulfilling the ultimate goal of delivering the optimal, professional, evidence-based nursing care.

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Conclusion

The primary goal of any nurse is to provide high-quality care to the patients based on the latest evidence obtained through research. Even though it has been established that research has a tremendous effect on nursing practice, current evidence suggests that nurses encounter a variety of barriers to research utilization. Among those barriers, there is a lack of knowledge of the research process and the inability of nurses to critically analyze research studies. Drawing upon this information, this paper discussed the importance of quantitative research methodology in the nursing field and how, regardless of the design and sampling technique utilized, this approach helps healthcare professionals respond to changes in patient populations and determine effective best practices. By informing nursing practice, research creates opportunities to establish ways of reducing hospital errors and improving patient outcomes, as well as lays the foundation for comprehensive, evidence-based nursing care. Therefore, nurses should be actively engaged in research and understand the basic principles of research to achieve better care

standards and approach each patient in an evidence-based manner, thus fulfilling the ultimate goal of delivering the

optimal, professional nursing care.

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