EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE: NURSES AS RESEARCHERS

Research evidence can improve the quality of care that patients receive. Research can evaluate how effective nursing practices are and the relative effectiveness of different nursing practices as well as test nursing theory.

Nurses and research
Nurses contribute to research in many different ways. Their patients may be involved in clinical trials and they therefore need to comply with the trials’ protocols. Some nurses may be employed in research assisting with recruitment and data collection or delivering specific interventions.

Nurses may also be involved as investigators and guide the research projects. These nurse researchers identify specific research inquiries, seek funding and then design and conduct research activities as well as analyse and translate findings to implement new practices. Their work may be disseminated through publications or by presenting at conferences and meetings.

Nursing research
As well as nurse researchers who may investigate any clinical or health care issue, nursing research looks at specific problems or questions about the practice of nursing. Nursing research is defined as the application of scientific inquiry to the phenomena of concern to nursing. It aims to
- build the body of nursing knowledge
- assess potential improvements in nursing practice, and
- assist in making healthcare efficient and cost effective.

In Australia, the National Nursing and Nursing Education Taskforce identified four priorities for nursing research in Australia: contributing to research on national health priority areas; developing a research critical mass; growing generations of researchers; and translating research into practice. Hanney and Griffiths (2011) have indicated that there are some issues in assessing the economic value and impact of nursing research that need to be considered.

Further Information
- Introduction to Nursing Research (e-book from Nursing research website)
- Building research capacity in the nursing workforce: the design and evaluation of the nurse researcher role (Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing article)
- Australian Nursing Federation policy on nursing and midwifery research

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