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How to teach toward evidence-based practice

By Martha G. Tider and Peg Kerr

Evidence-based nursing practice is the conscientious and judicious use of current best evidence in the delivery of nursing services to individuals, groups, and communities. This includes application of scientific evidence from randomized clinical trials as well as other types of investigations (e.g., qualitative research, observational studies) and other types of knowledge (e.g., case reports). Although evidence-based practices save health care dollars and improve patient outcomes, application of research evidence in practice is sporadic at best, and studies continue to demonstrate that nurses use evidence-based practices inconsistently.

The role of the educator

Nurse educators have an accountability to produce graduates that can deliver evidence-based nursing care. Undergraduate and graduate nursing faculty are called to integrate the knowledge and skills of evidence-based practice (EBP) into the curricula. The value of EBP in educational settings is communicated by 1) the type of written materials and text-books required for courses, 2) the type of written papers required of students, 3) the reference sources used by faculty to develop lecture content and 4) the type of clinical learning experiences provided for students. For example, course textbooks should be evidence-based; this can be evaluated by reviewing the reference list in key areas (e.g., prevention of pressure ulcers, management of diabetes) to determine if research citations were used in writing the text. More radically, perhaps textbooks should no longer be used as a teaching source and students should learn to acquire evidence-based information from sources such as The Online Journal of Knowledge Synthesis for Nursing, the AHRQ Evidence-Based Practice Centers and the National Guideline Clearinghouse.

Bringing EBP to your baccalaureate students

There are several possibilities for integrating evidence-based knowledge and skills into nursing curricula. Faculty need to set forth educational outcomes regarding EBP knowledge and skills of graduates from baccalaureate, master's and doctoral programs. For example, baccalaureate graduates should be able to use electronic sources to access evidence-based information, read and apply research findings, question existing practices, and use critical thinking in the application of health care knowledge. Learning experiences for baccalaureate students should include questioning of professional nursing practices (e.g., daily bathing in the a.m.), thinking critically, asking clinically relevant questions about care delivered, reading and understanding research, and critiquing evidence-based practice guidelines. The traditional requirement of a "research proposal" paper in baccalaureate-level nursing research courses could, and probably should, be abandoned and replaced by an EBP paper. Faculty in skills labs should teach evidence-based procedures, and students should learn which procedures have an empirical evidence base and those for which there is little research evidence. Baccalaureate students also need experience with applying a model of evidence-based practice, the process of change, and use of evidence-based practice in their professional practice.

Rising stars talk research

The Rising Stars of Scholarship and Research poster presentations gave biennial convention attendees an opportunity to talk with students about their research projects and interests. We spoke with two "rising stars," Erin M. Nalewuy, RN, BSN, and David Zehs, RN, BSN.

Q: Why did you choose to do research?
EN: I became interested in research as an undergraduate student going into my junior year of nursing. I was extremely interested in the work of one of my professors. When I was hired in her lab, I was able to participate in the research that she was conducting and strengthen my understanding of basic neuroscience.

Q: Who influenced your pursuit of research?
EN: Janean Holden, RN, MS, PhD, greatly influenced my pursuit of research. If it were not for her, I would not be doing what I am doing today. When I was hired as an undergraduate student to assist in data collection, I began to work on a project that was already in place and to develop an interest in the work. Once I had more of a knowledge base, I was able to suggest various ideas to continue our work. This is how my topic, which I presented at the biennial convention, developed.

DZ: Martha Sparks, RN, CS, PhD, a professor at the University of Southern Indiana, was solely instrumental in my pursuit of research. She was my research advisor and mentor. Her research experience and ability to teach are second to none, and I feel fortunate to have been assigned to her and worked with her.

Q: How could educators most effectively encourage their students to pursue research?
EN: Educators could encourage their students to pursue research by letting them know what is out there. At the University of Illinois at Chicago, professors conduct their research right in the college, so students are aware of current research. Educators could bring current research to the forefront in the curriculum. Students could attend presentations on their campuses and other schools of nursing to find out what is going on in other schools. Educators could meet with researchers and discuss their research at conventions. As students learn about the research, they will become more interested in doing research themselves.

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Taking the leap of faith

A number of nurses today are taking a "leap of faith" from traditional patient care to a career as an entrepreneur. If you are one of them, whether changes in the health care setting or the desire to be your own boss are at the root of your desire, personal effectiveness is an essential part of success as a nurse entrepreneur.

Transitioning into the role of entrepreneur can be an exciting, as well as challenging, experience for health care professionals. Nurses considering an entrepreneurial role may want to ask themselves "What do I want?" and "What do I know best?" and "Do I have a passion for it?"

Being good at what you do is wonderful start. However, you will need a passion for working with diabetes. As Laura Hieronymus, RN, MSEd, CDE, and Patti Geil, MS, RD, CDE, and a team of physicians including Dr. John Borders (pictured), have shared, "the name of an equally qualified colleague for the presentation. Entrepreneurism is another avenue for nurses to consider. To quote the words of Benjamin Franklin, "Well done is better than well said." Your good job and professional attitude will speak for themselves!

Laura Hieronymus, RN, MSEd, CDE, and Patti Geil, MS, RD, CDE, are diabetes consultants and certified diabetes educators for the professional level. Entrepreneurs may appreciate the business and learn from you, as well. Are speaking engagement opportunities conflicting with your schedule? Rather than say no, offer another successful. This team approach to nursing research is a benefit to all involved.

Dr. M. Nalven, RN, BSN, is a research specialist at the University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Nursing and is a registered nurse at Rush Presbyterian St. Luke's Medical Center at the Mater CHILD Department.

David Zehr, RN, BSN, is an associate professor of nursing at Vincennes University in Jasper, Ind.

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Great support shown for research funds

Silent Auction, Fitness Walk/Run again successful contributors

Nurse researchers around the world will benefit from the generous show of support from colleagues and friends who willingly gave gifts and time to the annual Board of Directors Silent Auction and the Fitness Walk/Run. Gifts poured in from chapters and individuals to create an intriguing array of more than 100 items for convention participants to bid on at the Silent Auction. The event raised more than $11,000, and buyers benefited by purchasing items ranging from historical nursing textbooks and regional creations to original watercolors and jewelry.

The Walk/Run raised more than $5,200 as 351 fitness enthusiasts contributed funds for research. The Alpha Chapter from the Indiana University School of Nursing provided the sponsorship and volunteers for this year’s event.

Wyeth-Ayerst sponsored the CyberCafe, giving convention attendees the opportunity to view online demonstrations of services available on the Honor Society of Nursing Web site, www.nursingsociety.org. Demonstrations included the Virginia Henderson International Nursing Library, Online Case Studies for Nursing, My Info Search book and literature review services, and MTN customized job search.

Advancing Nursing Practice Excellence

Join your colleagues at the State of the Science Congress from September 25-28, 2002, at the J.W. Marriott in Washington D.C.

To submit your abstract, visit www.nursingsociety.org and follow the guidelines to submit your abstract electronically. The deadline is Friday, February 1, 2002. E-mail research@stti.iupui.edu with any questions.

Collateral reviewers needed!

- Are you a member of Sigma Theta Tau International?
- Do you have an earned doctorate?
- Have you completed at least one postdoctoral research activity involving submission of proposals for peer review for internal/external funding?
- Are you looking to gain valuable experience in the grant review process?

If you answered yes to the above questions, then you should apply to become a Collateral Reviewer.

Reviewers assist the society’s international research committee by critiquing research grant proposals and scientific abstracts within their areas of expertise. You will concentrate on Sigma Theta Tau International’s research grants program, including co-sponsored and corporate grants. Applications are invited from seasoned investigators, as well as those with research success in innovative registered nurses. Collateral reviewers are appointed for four-year terms with potential for reappointment.

For detailed application information, please visit the society’s Web site: www.nursingsociety.org/research or e-mail research@stti.iupui.edu.
Learn to apply evidence-based practice to nursing change in this article for publication.

The following honor societies have been welcomed into the Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International by the House of Delegates during the convention in Indianapolis.

University of Sao Paulo at Ribeirao Preto College of Nursing, Ribeirao Preto, Brazil
University of Utrecht and Hogeschool van Utrecht, Utrecht, Netherlands
Winston Salem State University, Winston Salem, North Carolina

Representatives from the University of Sao Paulo Ribeirao Preto College of Nursing in Brazil present their petition to become a recognized chapter of the Honor Society of Nursing.

Marita G. Titter, RN, PhD, FAAN, is the director of research, quality and outcomes management in the Department of Nursing Services and Patient Care at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City, Iowa. Peg Kerr, RN, MS, is a doctoral student at the University of Iowa College of Nursing. The authors express gratitude to Kim Jordan for her assistance in preparing this article for publication.

New honor societies chartered

New chapters in 12 states and three nations will add more than 3,000 members

Baccalaureate students also need to remain current and apply evidence-based nursing practice is essential for the profession of nursing and must begin early in the maturation process.

Electronic media and Web sites that focus on dissemination of nurse change champions in modifying electronic sources. Baccalaureate graduates who know how to access electronic evidence-based information and how to evaluate the quality of information acquired from these electronic sources. Baccalaureate graduates are also responsible for infusing evidence synthesis reports, evidence-based guidelines, research reports and Web sites that focus on dissemination of evidence will be prepared to stay abreast of the current best evidence as they practice. The culture of teaching/learning must convey that acquisition and application of evidence, preferably research evidence, is every nurse's responsibility. Socialization of students to remain current and apply evidence-based nursing practice is essential for the profession of nursing and must begin early in the maturation process.

EBP and the master's degree

Master's degree programs need to build upon the knowledge and skills of master's graduates. Doctoral education about evidence-based practice into the baccalaureate curriculum, and will provide leadership for an EBP team, implementing a change in practice from a pre-existing written EBP guideline that is of high quality, developing a CareMap/clinical pathway that is evidence-based, and hosting a journal club on a specific topic.

Doctoral students must bridge gap

Students enrolled in doctoral programs build upon the knowledge and skills of master's graduates. Doctoral education has traditionally focused on producing nurse scientists to build a program of research. These nurse scientists have a responsibility for ensuring that their findings are known and applied, as appropriate, by nurses in practice settings. This requires that they be knowledgeable and skilled in the process of aligning clinical and administrative practices with research evidence. Learning methods for creating organizational change that support evidence-based practice, supporting staff in keeping abreast of current evidence, and setting organizational expectations that practice is evidence-based should be a part of doctoral education. Providing leadership for an EBP team, students should include residencies in evidence-based practice, testing methods of translating research findings into practice, and methods of studying organizational climate that support evidence-based practices. Doctoral students also need to learn methods of program evaluation, research synthesis, and statistical methods commonly used in evaluating research evidence and implementing and evaluating evidence-based changes in practice. Programs in translating research into practice are needed to understand how to bridge the gap between research and practice. Doctoral education of nurse scientists must address this area of health services research.

Addressing the challenge

Challenges of integrating knowledge about evidence-based practice into nursing curricula include availability of faculty with expertise in evidence-based practice, rethinking the traditional content and methods used in teaching nursing research, forging close ties with practice sites that exemplify evidence-based practices, fostering interdisciplinary discussions and EBP projects, and demonstrating that evidence-based practices improve patient outcomes. Educators can begin addressing these challenges by answering the following questions: 1) How will evidence-based practice be defined in the curriculum? 2) What are the critical EBP competencies of graduates from baccalaureate, master's and doctoral programs? 3) What experiences promote learning the knowledge and skills of EBP at each level within the curriculum and how will faculty role model EBP in teaching students to deliver nursing care? Preparing nurses to practice based upon the best evidence is essential to shorten the time between discovery of new knowledge and application of the knowledge in practice.

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Ashland University, Ashland, Ohio
California State University Stanislaus, Turlock, California
Carroll-Columbia College of Nursing, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tennessee
Clarke College, Dubuque, Iowa
Dalhousie University School of Nursing, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
Florida A&M University, Tallahassee, Florida
Framingham State College, Framingham, Massachusetts
Mount Carmel College of Nursing, Columbus, Ohio
Northern Kentucky University, Highland Heights, Kentucky
Presentation College, Aberdeen, South Dakota
Shenandoah University, Winchester, Virginia
Southeastern Louisiana University School of Nursing, Hammond and Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Southern Adventist University and the University College School of Nursing, Collegedale, Tennessee

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