

Involving Undergraduate Students in Nursing Research: Why It is a Win-Win

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As a dean or nurse educator, have you ever heard nursing students lament that nursing research is so boring? In my nine years of serving as Faculty Advisor to our student nurses group at the University of Pennsylvania, I have had a lot of opportunity to speak with nursing students from across the United States. From these experiences at multiple state and national conventions, I have heard repeatedly that students experience frustration with either perceiving nursing research as boring or ineffective in the method in which they are learning or exposed to nursing research. I have also seen the lack of enthusiasm for nursing research carry over into professional nurses. Every time that a nurse or student expresses boredom with nursing

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research, I am both saddened and concerned about how we as educators ensure that our students have a passion for nursing research that will ensure that our graduates will operate from an evidence-based practice perspective.

Students should be introduced to the concept of nursing research from the very beginning of their program. In the first introduction to professional nursing course, students should be exposed to nursing research in a way that all students' individual passions can be developed. This works best by ensuring that a wide variety of topical areas are presented and that this research is presented in a fashion that applies to actual clinical practice. For example, this could be done by inviting faculty from all clinical areas of practice to spend a portion of each class speaking about their program of research and clinical practice. If you

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do not have faculty available, the same process could be used by bringing in research articles from various clinical areas and discussing how these can be applied to practice. Exposing students to nursing research from their first class is also an ideal method for recruiting students to be involved and passionate

about breastfeeding from early in their program.

In other nursing courses, students must be introduced to research findings in every lecture and how those research findings apply to clinical practice. For each class topic, the lecturer should post or have students choose an article from the past few years that applies to that class topic. These research findings should be integrated into the class discussion with implications for evidence-based practice. In statistics and research courses, the emphasis should be on how students can read, understand, and then apply research to their practice setting. Allowing the students to partner with or shadow a researcher in the area of their interest will also allow for students to find their individual passions in nursing. Students should also be given the opportunity to tailor their course

projects or class assignments to clinical areas that are of interest to them. It may be helpful to have the students either develop a research question and understand the related background literature or develop a protocol for the translation of research into clinical practice. Having students understand how

research will apply to and be used in their clinical practice will be integral for preparing them for a career of research utilization in practice.

In elective courses, there may also be an opportunity for students to gain research skills. In my seminar course, "Nursing 361 – Breastfeeding and Human Lactation" (Spatz, 2005), students complete reviews and critiques of research articles bi-weekly. As part of these reviews, the students consider not only strength and weaknesses of the article, but also how that study may be applied to clinical practice. Another option is to have students complete an analysis of current literature/state of the science paper as part of their final capstone course. An example of this is the senior inquiry that students at the University of Pennsylvania complete as part of their capstone experience. The student selects a faculty mentor based on his/her mutual interest in a clinical/research topic area. The student reviews all current research literature and develops a table of evidence. From this table of evidence, the student identifies common themes in the state of the science, areas for future research, and what the implications are for clinical practice and education. Students may also be successful in publishing their manuscripts in professional journals (Buswell & Spatz, 2007).

Outside of the classroom, nursing students can be involved in nursing research in a variety of methods and fashions, including work study employment, research assistant positions, volunteer work, independent study, class requirements/extra credit, and/or independent research with a faculty mentor. With any of these options, the earlier in a student's program of study that they are involved, the more advanced tasks and skills that student can perform. With the federal work study program, there are a variety of opportunities to recruit students into the research world. Work study positions allow students to gain important professional skills while receiving pay that assists them with the cost of their education. For the faculty member, it is an econom-

ical method of hiring research assistants. For work study and research assistance positions, it will be important for the researcher/faculty member to interview the student carefully, and realistically prepare the student for the job requirements to ensure success of the relationship. It is important to provide clear descriptions of the responsibilities and time commitment involved. Arranging for the student to complete Web-based modules for institutional review board requirements should be part of their employment contract. As part of the regular curriculum and courses, students should be offered enrichment opportunities to be involved with nursing research. At the school level, a publication for student research could also be developed. At the University of Pennsylvania, students led an initiative to develop a student-run organization, the Organization of Student Nursing Research. This student group solicits article submissions from the student body and peer-edits the articles. These are published in the *Journal of Nursing Student Research*. This gives students the opportunity to understand the review and editing process that their faculty members and researchers experience.

Two case examples will be provided. Catie was referred to me during her freshman year as being work-study eligible and interested in pediatrics. Catie began her employment as a work study student as a clinical and research assistant. In her first year, her jobs included the development of slides, literature searches, and development of materials for training sessions and data collection. As Catie advanced her skills and knowledge, she moved on to complete her required institutional review board modules. She then was presented with the opportunity to develop a poster abstract and presentation for an international presentation (Repetto & Spatz, 2006). During this process, the student was given the opportunity to improve both written and verbal skills. Many universities have funds available for independent student research with a faculty mentor. Catie

was encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity. Through a combination of independent study and a focused research project, she was able to explore through qualitative interviews mothers' experiences with breastfeeding in public.

Lisa approached me as an upper level student seeking to be involved in research. She volunteered her time as a research assistant in order to gain experience. She worked with a team of students and advanced practice nurses and was trained on completing phone and in-person interviews (Ford, Lewis, & Spatz, 2002, 2003). From this volunteer work, Lisa was able to develop an independent study project and complete her senior thesis examining breastfeeding. This student is currently in a PhD program.

Involving more nursing students in research will hopefully ignite a passion in many of them, which will lead to more students seeking both master's degrees and doctoral studies. The shortage of nurse educators and nurses with advanced degrees is still staggering. By involving students in nursing research early and often in their nursing programs, perhaps more students will be motivated and inspired to seek further education earlier in their careers. Certainly, by creating exposure and enthusiasm about nursing research, we will be ensuring that our future nurses embrace nursing research and seek to both create evidence-based care guidelines and apply research in their daily practice as nurses. **DN**

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27 National Nursing Organizations Join Together to Commission a Study of the Impact of Advanced Practice Registered Nurses on Health Care Quality, Safety, and Effectiveness

The Tri-Council for Nursing is collaborating with a number of national nursing organizations to commission a study of the impact Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) have on health care quality and patient outcomes. The first comprehensive study of its kind in 20 years, researchers will examine the evidence connected to care provided by nurses in the four APRN roles – Clinical Nurse Specialists, Nurse Anesthetists, Nurse Midwives, and Nurse Practitioners. Following a competitive process, Robin Newhouse, PhD, RN, CNAA, BC, CNOR, with the University of Maryland School of Nursing, has been selected as the principal investigator for this project. The trans-disciplinary team members are from the University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins University.

Though APRNs have been linked to improved access to health care services, enhanced patient

safety, and cost-effective care, a contemporary systematic review is needed to gauge the overall impact these providers are having in today's health care system. In 1987, the federal Office of Technology Assessment conducted a meta-analysis of the quality and safety of care delivered by nurse practitioners, physician's assistants, and certified nurse midwives. The overwhelming conclusion of that analysis was that these clinicians are highly skilled, knowledgeable, and effective providers of care. This study also concluded that a significant portion of the care needs of this country could be delivered by these clinicians. Since this study was released, no other national analysis of the growing body of research on APRN practice has been conducted.

This new research effort, titled *An Assessment of the Safety, Quality, and Effectiveness of Care Provided by Advanced Practice Nurses*, will culmi-

nate in an expansive final report, which will summarize the latest data on APRNs, as well as an article for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. This work is expected to be completed by January 2009. The organizations supporting this work understand the essential role APRNs play in the health care delivery system and recognize the ability of these clinicians to provide effective, high quality interventions.

The Tri-Council for Nursing, a long-standing alliance whose members include the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, American Nurses Association, American Organization of Nurse Executives, and National League for Nursing, initiated this analysis of current APRN practice and associated outcomes. To date, 23 additional nursing organizations have endorsed this work and provided the financial contributions needed to fund this sizable study. **DN**

Attention Nursing Faculty: Undergraduate Scholarships and Graduate Faculty Fellowships Available

Undergraduate Scholarships

If your nursing students are looking for additional financial assistance to support their education, then they need look no further than to the Foundation of the National Student Nurses' Association (FNSNA). The FNSNA was created in 1969 to honor Frances Tompkins, the Association's first Executive Director. Organized exclusively for charitable and educational purposes, FNSNA awards scholarships to qualified nursing students annually.

Awards range from \$1,000 to \$5,000. Completed applications must be received by Friday, January 16, 2009. Winners will be notified in March 2009. Only winners will be notified. Additionally, scholarship sponsors and recipients will be recognized at the National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA) Annual Convention in Nashville, Tennessee.

Faculty Fellowships

If you know any faculty member that would like to pursue an advanced degree, Promise of Nursing Regional Faculty Fellowships are available in select regions around the country for baccalaureate prepared nurses wishing to pursue a career in nursing education.

Awards range from \$1,000 to \$7,500. Completed applications must be received by Friday, March 6, 2009.

For more information on any of these scholarship opportunities or to download an application, visit www.nsna.org and click on "Foundation/Scholarships," or call 718-210-0705.



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DEAN'S Notes is indexed in

Cumulative Index to Nursing & Allied Health Literature.

DEAN'S Notes is published five times a year (September, November, January, March, and May) by Anthony J. Jannetti Inc., East Holly Avenue Box 56, Pitman, New Jersey 08071-0056. Telephone 856.256.2300. FAX 856.589.7463. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the express written permission of the publisher. Address changes should include mailing label and be forwarded to the publisher.

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Carol Fetters Andersen Joins NSNA Staff as Director of Governance and Program Development

NSNA is proud to announce that past president (1991-1992) Carol Fetters Andersen, MSN, RN has joined the executive staff at NSNA as Director of Governance and Program Development.

In her role at NSNA, she will work with nursing student leaders across the country in the areas of governance, legislation/education, disaster preparedness, community health, resolutions, and nominations and elections. Experienced as an association executive, she will assist with program development, including services and products to build leadership skills within the student membership, now 51,000 strong. Her book, *Nursing Student to Nursing Leader: The Critical Path to Leadership Development in Nursing*, published by Delmar Cengage Learning (1999; second edition under revision), is used by nursing schools in the U.S. and abroad and is the required text for NSNA's Leadership University (<http://www.nsnaleadershipu.org/nsnalu>).

Immediately prior to joining the NSNA staff, Carol spent four years with

the National League for Nursing (NLN) in New York, the nation's largest and oldest membership organization in nursing education. She served in numerous management capacities for NLN during her tenure, including Manager for Professional Development, Director of Product Development, and most recently as Director of Curriculum Assessment and Retention Solutions for NLN Testing Services. She also worked with the NLN Nurse Educator Workforce Development Advisory Council, and their task groups on Leadership in Nursing Education and Healthful Work Environments, the Evaluation of Learning Advisory Council, the NLN Think Tank on Expanding Diversity in Nursing Education, and the NLN Think Tank on Assessment and Evaluation in Nursing Education.

Carol completed her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Grand View College in Des Moines (1992) and her Master of Science in Nursing at the University of Iowa (1998). She has held

numerous clinical, professional, and academic leadership positions over her 16 year career in nursing. Prior to joining NLN, she was a Visiting Professor at Harford Community College in Bel Air, MD, and faculty in the RN-BSN program at the College of Notre Dame in Maryland.

Today, Carol is a doctoral candidate at Teachers College Columbia University, in the Doctor of Education Executive Program for Nurses. Her dissertation is titled *Expanding Diversity in Nursing Education Leadership: Understanding the Experiences of Minority Nurse Educators Achieving Tenure*. Representing NLN in 2006, she was one of 30 nurse leaders who attended the Second National Leadership Summit on Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health, and has been invited back in February 2009. Carol hopes to complete her doctorate in 2009, at which time she plans to complete study to achieve recognition as a Certified Association Executive (CAE). **DN**