



Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences

**STAFF NURSES' ATTITUDE AND PERCEPTION TOWARDS
NURSING RESEARCH**

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Bachelor of Nursing with Honours
(2008)



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This research report is part of the final year project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Nursing with Honours

Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences
UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA SARAWAK
(2008)

ABSTRACT

This descriptive exploratory survey examined staff nurses' attitude and perception towards nursing research. The target population in this study were the staff nurses in Sarawak General Hospital. A purposive sample of 40 female staff nurses who met the eligibility criteria for the study included the following: (1) female; (2) has five years experiences in nursing field were being selected. The respondents work in different setting which involve medical-surgical ward, operation theatre, eye clinic and paediatric medical ward. Most of the respondents were diploma staff nurses (n=37). Forty five percent (n=18) have more than 10 years experience in nursing field. More than 50 percent of the respondent never involve in research conducting but 80 percent (n=32) willing to participate in research activity if they were give a chance. Ninety seven percent (n=39) of the respondent can perceive the benefits engaging in nursing research. Several lacking in terms of time (87.5%), money (80%), cooperation from the subject (80%), research skill (92.5%) and someone with who can collaborate (92.5%) are the dominant barriers to participate in research. About 82.5% (n=33) of the nurses had either unfavourable or lukewarm attitude. The most helpful strategy identified in this study is organizing workshop, seminar, conferences which cultivate research culture and enhance research skill. As a conclusion, Malaysian nurses need to unite and fully support the effort in enhancing research involvement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researcher wishes to acknowledge the indebtedness to the supervisor, Assoc. Prof Dr Mehm Tha Shein and course coordinator, Ms. Rosalia Saimon for their supervision and guidance. In addition, I want to thank all the nursing lecturers and clinical teachers who provided the insightful comments.

I would like to extend my warmest thanks to Prof Dr Sim Kui Hian and the staff at Clinical Research Centre (CRC), Sarawak General Hospital, who helped in ethical approval for this research. Matron Asma Sebli has earned my special thanks and includes sisters-in-charge from medical-surgical ward, paediatric medical ward, Eye clinic, trauma and major operation theatre, provided their helping hand in data collecting process. I would like to express my gratitude to the staff nurses who involved in this research and all the others behind the scenes for their contributions.

Finally, I thank my friends and family, who were patience and supportive throughout this enterprise.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In professional nursing today, there is a strong emphasis on evidence-based nursing. Nurses are expected to conduct their practice in scientific manner and adopt a research/evidence-based approach. The term evidence-based practice means incorporating the theory, clinical decision making and judgement, and knowledge of the research process into the evaluation of research and scientific evidence and apply the best available evidence to a specific clinical problem (Blais, Hayes, Kozier & Erb, 2006). Application of research and scientific evidence ensure nurse's specific actions and decisions are appropriate, cost-effective, safe and high quality. Evidence-based nursing are an essential tool to further develop nursing identity as a profession. In this chapter, the researcher discussed about the nature of nursing research and current trend in Malaysia settings. Besides, the problem statement, purpose of study, significance of study, research question, research objectives and operational definition of terms are the areas that will be covered to provide an outline about this research.

What is nursing research?

Research is systemic inquiry that uses disciplined methods to answer questions or solve problem. Whereas, nursing research is further defined as systematic inquiry designed to develop knowledge about issues of importance to nurses, including nursing practice, nursing education, and nursing administration (Polit, Beck, & Hungler, 2001). Since the 1950s, nursing has increasingly emphasized the development of research in order to broaden its body of nursing knowledge. The American Nurses' Association (ANA) Houses of Delegates approved nine provisions of the new Code of Ethics for Nurses at its June 30, 2001 meeting in Washington, DC. The 7th code of ethic stated that the nurse has the obligations 'to participate in the advancement of the profession through contributions to practice, education, administration, and knowledge development.' (ANA, 2008). Therefore, the research conducted is not only the responsibilities of nursing undergraduate students and doctoral degree nurses. It is the responsibility for all the nurses. Although, not all nurses are trained to conduct research, but all can contribute research ideas and assist in various aspects of the research process. Their attitudes and perceptions toward research will be the key points in this context. In this study, the researcher will focus on the clinical nursing research, that is, research designed to generate knowledge to guide the nursing profession and to improve the care and quality of life of patients. The researcher will explore about the attitudes and perceptions of a group of staff nurse who working in clinical areas toward nursing research.

Nursing research in today's Malaysia

Malaysian nurses are still at its infancy stage towards being full professional in their trade/practice. Gone are the days when nurses are doctor's hand-maidens or assistant. YB Dato' Dr Chua Soi Lek who gave a speech at the launch of International Nurses' Day, 2006 had mentioned that nowadays nurses and doctor are viewed as partners in the provision of health care, and nurses are expected to develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills and professionalism necessary for that role. Therefore it is very important for Malaysian nurses to have a specialized body of knowledge which can act as a foundation and guidelines for nursing practices in our own setting. The national nurse's professional organization in Malaysia, Malaysian Nurses Association (MNA) has clearly stated the aim of the association to promote nursing research among Malaysian nurses. This association collaborates with universities and other agencies to organize research related activities such as workshop, conferences, and training courses. Most of the college of nursing have integrated research skill in their program curricula. In their three year diploma program, nursing research as a subject is not emphasized. Yet they are expected to contribute and participate in nursing research at the end of the course. This will hamper research efforts as the researchers are not trained in that aspect. Whereas, for the undergraduate of four years Bachelor of Nursing Degree, they must complete a research project as a criteria to graduate and it will be introduced to them in the final year. They are expected to contribute and participate in nursing research at the end of the course

Besides, President of the Malaysian Nurses Association (MNA), Pn Hj Ramziah bt Hj Ahmad stated, "Currently, nurses are exposed to the trends of evidence-based nursing...the importance of research practice cannot be denied, if we want to sustain our professionalism in nursing. I truly encourage all nurses to learn to be researcher."

Due to the emphasis placed on research globally and also in Malaysia context, the time is ripe to examine the meaning of this endeavour to the staff nurses.

Problem statement

Staff nurses have different involvement and attitudes towards research conducting. The involvement in clinical nursing research depends on the attitude nurses hold toward research and the way they perceive barriers and benefits along the research conducting. A study done by Olade (2003) on attitude and factors affect research utilization among nurses showed that only 23.6% of the respondent had favorable attitude but 76.4% had either lukewarm or unfavorable attitude towards nursing research. Therefore, the evaluation of staff nurses' attitude and perception towards nursing research are essential in order to promote evidence-based nursing practice in Malaysia.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the attitudes and perceptions of staff nurses in hospital setting (Sarawak General Hospital) towards nursing research. The barriers, benefits and strategies in research conducting were studied.

Significance of Study

The results of this study will provide direction for efforts in promoting research activities. The recommendations of the findings can be effective strategies to encourage Malaysian nurses to participate actively in research making. This study will ultimately be beneficial to the health care agencies such as hospital, clinic and nursing home; nurses' associations such as MNA; nursing institutions.

Research Question

The research question is what are the attitudes and perceptions towards nursing research among staff nurses?

Research Objectives

This study seeks to accomplish the following objectives:

- (1) To describe staff nurses' involvement in clinical research from the aspects of attitudes and perceptions towards nursing research.
- (2) To identify the barriers, benefits and strategies to encourage research conducting.
- (3) To use the findings to develop recommendations for possible increase chance that staff nurses will develop favourable attitude and involve actively in research conducting.

Operational Definition of Terms

The term "attitude" used in this context refers to the way subjects think and feel towards research making (Oxford Student's Dictionary of English, 2001). Based on the questionnaire (section D), ten positive and ten negative adjectives are used to measure the attitude. The number indication used in the scale is as followed:

- 1 – Strongly negative
- 2 – Negative
- 3 – Positive
- 4 – Strongly positive

The word “perception” refers to the ability to notice or the way subjects looking at the research advantages and the problem in research participation (Oxford Student’s Dictionary of English, 2001). Based on the section B and C, there are a total of 14 statements that describe the perception on nursing research benefits and barriers, 7 statements for each respectively. The indication used is as followed:

1 – Strongly agree

2 – Agree

3 – Disagree

4 – Strongly disagree

In this chapter, the importance of nursing research was discussed. The necessity of nurses’ involvement in nursing research was also briefly discussed and will be discuss at length in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The art versus science approach to the practice of nursing can be a source of conflict among the nurses. Is nursing a kind of art or science or the combination of both? The art of nursing embraced caring and compassion, whereas the science of nursing refers to the empirical knowledge comes from scientific evidenced. According to Meintz and Van Sell, (1994, cited in Sapountzi-Krepia 2002), nursing foundation is a combination of knowledge from the science and humanities. Besides, research act as a disciplined inquiry to influence nursing knowledge. Therefore, the nature of nursing is a combination of a science and an art. Research is a key point to generate empirical knowledge. With this, every nurse has the responsibility to do research. In this chapter, the researcher discusses the review of literature in relation to nursing research and nurses' attitude and perception towards nursing research.

Brief History of Research in Nursing

To promote nursing as 'profession', research is pivotal in the transmission of the unique body of knowledge. The history of nurses as researchers dates back to Florence Nightingale who was the first research-minded nurse. Her landmark publication, *Notes on Nursing* (1896), described her early research interest in environmental factors that promote physical and emotional well-being (Polit, Beck, & Hungler, 2001). In the 1950s and 1960s, a number of factors have accelerated research in nursing. However, in early multidisciplinary research, the nursing contribution was played down by the

wider academic community. Besides, the development of a research base in nursing also faced several problems like inadequate in funding, lack of a well-developed research infrastructure and lack of robust higher educations for nurses (Kirby, 2004). In 1970s and 1980s, nurses also began to pay more attention to the utilization of research findings in nursing practice. Several events provided impetus for nursing research such as first publication of *Annual Review of Nursing Research* and *Applied Nursing Research Journal*. There was a big advancement in nursing research during year 1993 (Kirby, 2004). National Institute of Nursing Research put research into the mainstream of research activities. Nursing research continues to develop at a rapid pace and will continue to flourish in the 21st century. The leader of nursing research has tried to solve the problem and create supportive and enabling environment that incorporates accessible facilities to stimulate research culture in nursing field. Therefore, nurses must be confident in their role, cultivate the identity as a researcher. As the biggest group of health care provider, nurses must have positive attitudes and perceptions towards research activities in order to make it as a way of life and as a culture.

Research Culture and Awareness

It is essential that a research culture is cultivated as a foundation to support the growth of nursing advancement in the world and also in Malaysia. According to Mohamed & Low (2006),

The development of a research culture complements the public's needs and expectations of a high quality standard and scientifically established health care programmes and treatments... Research also encourages successful promotion and protection of health. With proper governance of research, it also helps to instil confidence in our public and as a result, they benefit from quality research in healthcare.

Therefore, researches will not only benefit the health-care provider but also the consumer. Nowadays, the era of consumer, they have the rights to deserve higher quality services that meet their needs. To compete with other discipline and survive in the new era, nurses have to sharpen their research skills and using those skills to address issues of importance to the profession and its clientele.

The academic sectors in Malaysia also working hard to cultivate Malaysian research culture. Faculty of Medicine (University of Malaya) formulated the research culture based on three elements which are research minded, awareness and appreciation. Research minded emphasized on researcher's uses of critical thinking and questioning approach in his or her work. Research awareness generally refers to the researcher's confidence development in doing research. The final element, research appreciation, means the researcher has pleasure and enthusiasm for the research (Mohamed & Low, 2006).

Research culture and research awareness are interrelated. Several studies were done to evaluate the research awareness among certain group of nurses. Respondents appear to be convinced that research plays an important role in improving standards and changing practices. This point was reinforced by 86% ($n=701$) of respondents strongly

agreeing or agreeing with the idea that evidence-based practice is the way forward to change clinical practice (McSherry, Artley, & Holloran, 2006). The results of study from Bahtsevani, Khalaf, & Willman (2005) also demonstrate an increase in awareness concerning the concept of evidence-based nursing and access to literature between data collection. They stated that “There was an increase of 31% in respondents’ awareness of the term Evidence-based Nursing (EBN) and a 30% increase in exposure to EBN literature between the first and the second distribution. However, 40% in the second distribution reported no access to literature.” These two research papers showed that majority of the respondents have high awareness towards the EBN concept.

Fostering a research culture is something that is frequently stated but rarely articulated. In essence, it should be about developing a climate in which research is not only valued and seen for its intrinsic worth, but is also considered an integral aspect of routine activity in an organization, whether it be, for example, a university or a hospital (Thompson, 2003). An intimate research culture will create awareness among staff nurses and increase the research capacity in that certain setting.

Attitude as an Influence Factor

Researcher suggests that attitude is one of the primary factors that influence the use of evidence base and become “research aware” (McSherry, Artley, & Holloran, 2006; Bahtsevani, Khalaf, & Willman, 2005; Olade, 2003). A research paper about nurses’ attitude to evidence-based practice showed that respondents generally displayed positive attitudes towards evidence-based practice and its key elements. However, as is to be expected, a number of the sample considered clinical effectiveness to be a negative development (D. Upton & P. Upton, 2005). There are several factors that

affect nurses' attitude towards research. A study done by Olade (2003) on attitude and factors affect research utilization among nurses showed that only 23.6% of the respondent had favorable attitude but 76.4% had either lukewarm or unfavorable attitude towards nursing research. Besides, she also found that nurses' attitude and interest toward research varied with the education level and position. A good knowledge base is an important ingredient in research utilization. Good knowledge help nurses understand the methodology and concept used in research so that they can participate in. Besides, nurses as both consumer and researcher should have adequate knowledge to understand the literatures and able to criticize. Therefore, educational preparation would be essential. The need to prepare researchers at all educational levels was emphasized at the 2003 Annual Meeting of ALADEFE which is a faculty under Latin American Association of Nursing School (Harrison, Hernandez, Cianelli, Rivera, & Urrutia, 2005). There are different levels of research knowledge that need to be included in the educational program for diploma and post basic program, bachelor, master and doctoral degree in nursing.

In Malaysia, most of the staff nurses in clinical area are diploma holder. But, they are only having superficial exposure to research related knowledge and skill. But according to Taylor, Lillis, and LeMone (2001, quoted in Ayers & Coeling 2005), "without incorporation of the research process into all levels of the profession, nursing will show little growth or improvement of current practice... professional standards suggest nurses prepared at all levels have a responsibility for nursing research." Therefore, research is not only for master and doctoral degree holder, but it is for all nurses as members in nursing world.

Perceptions toward Barriers

There was a lot of studies explore about the barriers faced by nurses in the research activities. Limitation in terms of time, knowledge or skill, administrative support, funding, collaboration partner, cooperation from subjects and staffs as well as lack of research consultative support are the obstacles or barriers that prevent nurses involve in research activities (McSherry, Artley & Holloran, 2006; Bahtsevani, Khalaf & Willman, 2005; Rosaline, 2003; Rosaline, 2004; Kocha, Cookb, Tankersleya & Rumrilla, 2006; Levin & Feldman, 2006). Survey done by Rosaline (2003) and Pravikoff, Tanner, and Pierce (2005, cited in Levin & Feldman, 2006), proved that lack of time was the primary barriers to evidence-based practices for the population studied. Whereas, study of Australian nurses done by Bucknall, Copnell, Shannon and McKinley's (2001, cited in Rosaline 2004) revealed that 42% of participants believed they were not adequately prepared to evaluate research, and there was a lack of organizational support and management commitment for the development of evidence-based nursing. A qualitative research by using "focus group" approach further explored the factors that constraint nurses from research participation (Roxburgh, 2005). In Roxburgh study, the researcher found that the level of educational preparation did not offer significance different in the knowledge of research. Most participants have no formal educational preparation in research method. The study suggested a need to assess the educational preparation on skill and knowledge to interpret research findings and statistical data. Those few who had, demonstrated limited enhanced knowledge of the subject. There is a need to know about the nurses' perception towards barriers of engaging in research. The data may help to come out effective strategies to overcome the obstacle and encourage more participation from nurses in research activities.

Facilitators in Research Activities

A review of literature was conducted using MEDLINE and CINAHL by Rosaline (2004) to search for article on research utilization for evidence-based practice in health care delivery. She concluded that several studies have documented some factors that facilitate the use of research evidence in nursing. These facilitators include administrative commitment and support, knowledge of the research process, availability of research consultants, favorable research attitude, affiliation with a university, and financial resources. Another research paper described about the factor analysis of the research capacity development in the nursing field that identified three elements which must be developed simultaneously – the skill base of practitioners, the infrastructure of organizations, and the reflective development-oriented nature of the immediate work environment (Watson, Clarke, Swallow & Foster, 2005). Achieving this will create the climate in which nurses can seek for their full potential in participating in research activities or as a research user.

There are also several studies done on nursing research priorities. Seems that there are increasingly limited resources, monetary resources are no longer available for all research projects that need to be undertaken. Therefore, efforts must be focused on research projects that are of the highest priority as perceived by experts (Lopez, 2003). In Thailand, there are one working group focused on identifying health research priority areas for nursing and midwifery based on national and global research priorities and agenda (Vonderheid et al., 2007).

A research article had recommended Caseload Model to help health care staff individually or in teams to engage in research activity and disseminate results (Grange,

Casey and WordsWorth, 2005). It supports staffs who want to get started in research, need funding, and want to disseminate research or evidence based practice project results. The results have been positive, with more than 300 staff being supported to engage in research process. Research mentor network is one of the strategies suggested to assist the novice researcher. It requires the research collaboration between trust staff, and academic partners. For example, mentor from the diverse expertise that academic institution can help the inexperienced researcher in developing research proposal and provide guidance along the process. Furthermore, the trust staff, academic sector and multidisciplinary team can have the meeting once a month to enhance interprofessional relationship that resulting in a pooling of ideas and expertise, more informed practice and improved teamwork (Ovretveit et al, (1997, cited in Grange, Casey, and WordsWorth 2005). They also found that the workshop and training program are useful for the novice researcher to acquire the critical appraisal skills and writing for publication.

Olade (2003) stated, “There are several studies focusing on the barriers to research utilization but few on attitudes toward research.” However, there are no recent studies found about the perceptions of nurses toward benefits of engaging in research activities and specific strategies to promote research conducting in Malaysia setting. Nevertheless, those are few aspects that we need to evaluate in order to assess the research activity advancement in Malaysia. Therefore, studies on those aspects are essential. The next chapter will discuss about the research methodology in this study.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY