

# The Importance of Research for the Continuation of the OR Nursing Profession

By Gloria Stephens

The future of registered operating room nurses and nursing as a profession depends on the determination of OR nurses to develop and use research.

The concepts of nursing research were first discussed by Florence Nightingale in her "notes on nursing" and to this day the promotion of research is still an "uphill grind".

## Definition of Research

The Oxford dictionary's definition states: "endeavour to discover new or collate old facts by scientific study of a subject." Nursing research is a systematic critical investigation dealing in facts and relationships which covers clinical, educational and administrative practice.

## Advantages of Research

Nursing research enables nurses to:

1. Validate decisions related to nursing practice because the decisions are based on scientific data.
2. Upgrade and/or create new techniques/procedures that will improve the administration of patient care.
3. Use health care resources more effectively and efficiently.

Successful research in an Operating Room depends a great deal on the person in charge of the unit. This individual should:

- be familiar with research methods and actively participate,
- identify and support opportunities for research,
- cooperate, encourage and make available time and resources to conduct research in nursing and/or other health care disciplines,
- utilize research findings,
- assist the staff in interpreting and implementing

research findings,

- communicate research findings to appropriate disciplines,
- create a risk-free environment where staff nurses will question practices and/or try out new techniques.

The beginning of nursing research in North American may be the documentation in 1800 by James J. Walsh, in "History of Nursing", in which he stated the following:

"...until Lister's revolutionary discovery of the value of antiseptics in surgery ... made it absolutely necessary that nurses should be of such intellectual calibre and development as would permit them to be trained in the prevention of infection through absolute cleanliness".<sup>1</sup>

At Johns Hopkins, Baltimore in 1889, operating room nursing was identified as an area of specialization and thus became nursing's first specialty.<sup>2</sup> So from this beginning it was evident that specific curriculum, policies, job performance and procedures had to be developed, hence the Schools of Nursing. Training schools developed and the established curriculum soon became acceptable traditional practices.

As knowledge and technology advances it becomes evident that traditional practices, as well as possible new techniques, should be questioned to make sure the patient care of today is based on sound scientific data.

## Author

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Clinical research designed to identify patient care outcomes and to test the knowledge used in the practice setting is vital if we are to validate the operating room nurses role in perioperative nursing. All practicing OR nurses have a responsibility for nursing research including: valuing research, understanding the research process, developing skills to interpret and to evaluate research findings.

The Canadian Nurse Association<sup>3</sup> and the Provincial Nurses Association<sup>4</sup> have position statements relating to Nursing Research which give important guidelines to nurses in Canada. The Canadian Nurse Foundation<sup>5</sup> is another organization where assistance may be obtained on any aspects of research including funding if the criteria is met.

The Operating Room Nurses Association of Canada (ORNAC) has supporting research statements in the philosophy and "Recommended Standards of Nursing Practice" document.<sup>6</sup> The research statements include staff nurses and administration indicating the roles, functions, responsibilities and accountability in relation to research.

The ORNAC Research Committee has developed a vision, philosophy and mission statement which will help guide the committee as they fulfil their mandate.

### Vision

Research is a valued and integral component of professional perioperative nursing practice.

### Philosophy

ORNAC believes that research should direct and support perioperative nursing practice with the goal of focusing on:

- patient care,
  - collaborative and collegial relationships between members of the health care team,
  - cost effectiveness
- ORNAC supports risk taking, creativity, curiosity and commitment to research which will enhance:
  - the promotion of perioperative nursing,
  - the Operating Room Nurses Association of Canada
- RESEARCH may be conducted individually or as a collaborative interdisciplinary project.
  - OPERATING Room nurses involved in research will use a variety of methodologies to gather and

analyze data in order to form a broad scientific base for decision making, delivery and evaluation of patient care.

• ORNAC research will be congruent with the organization's philosophy and strategic plan.

### Mission

The ORNAC Research Committee is committed to:

1. investigate perioperative nursing practice by reviewing and evaluating nursing problems, traditional practice and current practices, in all levels including management, educators and staff,
2. develop methods to initiate and evaluate required change in practice,
3. promote and assist members to develop role model and mentoring skills for peers showing how to become involved in research and how research can influence nursing practice,
4. nurture and encourage others to become involved with work studies, projects and to question current practice.

Providing the assistance, creating and maintaining an environment that supports risk-taking, creativity and curiosity, requires commitment and focused attention from all levels of operating room nursing personnel.

Conducting researching studies is a tangible way to "live" the Recommended Standards of Nursing Practice in providing nursing care.

Operating room nurses will continue to be a vital link between technical advances and effective "caring" of the surgical patient.

### Notes

1. James, J. Walsh, History of Nursing, New York: P.J. Kennedy, 1929) p. 236.
2. Bette Clemons, "Lister's Day in America", *AORN Journal* 24, #1, July '76:47.
3. Canadian Nurses Association Position Statement, "Research in Nursing", Feb. '85.
4. Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia, *Position Statement: Nursing Research*, Jan. 1990.
5. Canadian Nurses Foundation
6. Operating Room Nurses Association of Canada (ORNAC) "Recommended Standards Professional and Clinical Practice", 1993. ■



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