

Making the Most of Partnerships

I couldn't find anything in the literature about my topic!" Sound familiar? Most educators will agree that this statement is a common refrain echoed by students. How we choose to help them learn the skills needed to provide informed nursing care or to identify the best teaching and learning practice is critical. The following letter to the *Journal of Nursing Education* from Karen O'Grady, formerly a Medical Librarian at the Kaiser Permanente Medical Center, reinforces the importance of establishing a partnership with a librarian in this endeavor.

The Letter

I read with interest the article by Boyd, Baliko, Herman, and Polyakova-Norwood (2012) in the November issue of the *Journal of Nursing Education*. The authors, four nursing professors from the University of South Carolina at Columbia, explained how they adjusted two sequential research courses to better acquaint their students with the research process and thus with evidence-based nursing practice. The online courses were already recognized as excellent by students and faculty, yet the instructors realized that students were still struggling with reading and understanding research reports.

In my work, I strive to make evidence interesting and accessible to working nurses. In my efforts to generate interest in the literature—by offering journal alerts through e-mail, suggesting journal clubs, leaving relevant articles in break-rooms, and showing nurses the journals that focus on their specialties—the response I usually receive is, “No thanks, we did all that stuff back in school.”

Despite the efforts of nursing faculty, I see a continued disconnect between nursing school research classes and evidence-based nursing practice. I rarely encounter

nurses who seek evidence relevant to their work, particularly in comparison with the physicians I serve. Only nursing students who happen to be in my hospital during their clinical rotations seek my help for their research assignments.

It is clear to me that we still have a long way to go in relating research skills authentically to nursing practice. For example, I have been surprised by how many nurses—even nurses who have completed advanced degrees—do not understand that an abstract is not the actual article. Many seem unaware of the existence or purpose of databases such as CINAHL®. It seems that working nurses believe that nursing research exists solely to help them jump through the hoops of their research assignments, rather than the assignments being regarded as practice for utilizing evidence throughout their careers.

I encourage every nurse educator to seek the help of a librarian in teaching research skills. Consider partnering with us throughout all of your courses to add bits of evidence seeking throughout your students' programs. Although I acknowledge that some of my colleagues are more helpful than others, the more a librarian knows about the topic you are teaching, the more helpful we can be. Nursing faculty and librarians form a natural partnership to help nurses use the evidence and practice lifelong learning.

My Response

As I read the letter, I was struck by Ms. O'Grady's acknowledgment that nurses often fail to use evidence in practice, their evident devaluing of its importance, and the missed opportunity to routinely engage with librarians as a valuable resource. Who better than librarians to help nurse educators help students not only to appreciate evidence but, more importantly, to continue

to use it once in practice and not just as an academic exercise as a student? Who better to help nurse educators integrate current research into their teaching-learning practices, whether the focus is a clinical topic or the teaching-learning process itself?

Although nurses and nurse educators frequently partner with members from other disciplines, Ms. O'Grady's plea to include librarians when planning courses is a call to action for nurse educators to partner with librarians to enhance the use of research throughout the educational experience. Thus, not only should nurse educators make it their practice to include librarians during course development, but they also should integrate expectations for research and use of evidence in every nursing course and clinical experience. Doing so would help foster a culture that values the use of evidence (Melnyk, Fineout-Overholt, Gallagher-Ford, & Kaplan, 2012), regardless of the setting. What better way for educators to influence practice, avail themselves of needed expertise, and ultimately ensure that care delivery is of the highest quality and informed by solid evidence!

References

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