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Advancing nursing research – Framework for research development

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Nursing research activities are also growing in Asian regions, e.g. Mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand. There is constant demand for nurse researchers to engage in high level research activities, quality output and to demonstrate the impact of research in driving practice and policy. However, many studies are small-scale local projects rather than a highly focused persistent ongoing research program that ends up in cumulative knowledge providing evidence for practice.

To enhance the impact of research, there is a need to develop research program which consists of a portfolio of research projects that together have significant critical mass which focused on a defined thematic area or problem. The research program could address an area using different designs and multi-methods, it could move from theories to empirical investigations and from empirical investigations to theories.

The framework for the design and evaluation of complex interventions developed by the Medical Research Council in 2008 could be used to guide development of nursing research program.

In 2000, the Medical Research Council in the United Kingdom published a framework to help researchers to recognise and adopt appropriate methods to build research program to evaluate complex intervention. The framework has been widely adopted and very influential. In 2008, the framework has been revised and updated (www.mrc.ac.uk/complexinterventionsguidance). The revised version is simple and comprehensive and could be used as a framework...
to guide nursing research program development. The framework consists of the four phases: development, feasibility/piloting, evaluation, and implementation. The following briefly explains the four phases [5].

**Development**: Before a substantial evaluation is undertaken, there is a need to identify the evidence base of the intervention. The researcher may need to conduct an integrated literature review or systematic review if none is available. It is followed by developing a theoretical understanding or modelling of the intervention or evaluating one that has already been developed.

**Feasibility/piloting**: Feasibility study and pilot study is important to understand the context in which interventions take place or revise research design.

**Evaluation**: Researchers need to choose the appropriate study design to answer the research questions. Researchers need to decide which outcomes are primary or secondary. Process evaluations, which explore the way in which the intervention under study is implemented, can provide insight into why an intervention works or fails.

**Implementation**: This phase aims to examine the longer term implementation of the intervention into routine practice. The tested intervention could be implemented in different centres with different patient groups and there will be ongoing evaluation of the outcomes.

This research framework proposed by the Medical Research Council [3] is a flexible framework and need not be in a linear sequence. Depending on the state of knowledge development, researchers can start their research from any phase in the framework.

Nursing makes increasingly significant contributions to people’s health and well-being. Nurses in Asia are proud of their contributions to research development [6]. To enhance the impact of nursing research, researchers have to ensure that the research is meeting the health care needs, contributing to resolution of a problem in health care delivery, and/or contributing to new knowledge development. To build a successful research program, interdisciplinary collaboration and academic-clinical partnership are important. Local, regional and international collaboration will also promote the impact of research.

**REFERENCES**


