Survey

Newly graduated Swedish nurses show a trend for increasing research use in the 5 years following qualification, with the trend starting after the second year

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Commentary on: **Wallin L,** Gustavsson P, Ehrenberg A, *et al*. A modest start, but a steady rise in research use: a longitudinal study of nurses during the first five years in professional life. *Implement Sci* 2012;**7**:19.

Implications for practice and research

- Wallin and colleagues reported an increasing use of research (trend) by nurses in Sweden during the first 5 years after graduation. Although these findings were not statistically significant, the results may have clinical relevance for those who prepare and employ new nurses.
- Research is needed on the influence of entry into practice and role transition on new nurses' ability to apply evidence in practice. New graduates reported less use of research and other evidence during the first 2 years after graduation compared with years 3–5, which may be consistent with reports of 'transition shock' following entry into practice.
- Additional research using qualitative methods is needed to provide a more in-depth understanding of best practices for preparing student nurses for evidence-based practice.
- The authors described variations in types of research used. Additional studies on types of research used by new graduates may provide a basis for curricula modification to promote use of evidence-based practice in clinical settings.

Context

Wallin *et al* described a paucity of research on registered nurses' integration of research into practice after graduation. They conducted a 5-year prospective study to describe the use of three types of research and other evidence in clinical practice by new nurse graduates in Sweden.

Methods

Sample

The authors obtained data from an ongoing national longitudinal study of the transition of nursing students to practising registered nurses (Longitudinal Analysis of Nursing Education (LANE) study).[1] The cohort included 1501 students who agreed to participate in the LANE study and who graduated in 2004 from the 26 universities in Sweden that prepare registered nurses.

Data collection tool

Data were obtained from the annual LANE survey.[1] Self-reported demographic data and data from survey questions about use of research in clinical practice were analysed. The questions about use of evidence in clinical practice were based on Estabrooks'[2] conceptualisation of research as instrumental (use of research to guide practice decisions; make practice decisions), conceptual (use of research that results in a change in thinking but not always a change in practice) and persuasive (use of research to convince others).

Procedure

The authors conducted a secondary data analysis of demographic characteristics and responses to questions from the annual LANE survey to describe the use of nursing research and other evidence as reported by nursing graduates during their first 5 years (2006–2010) of practice.

Methods of data analysis

The authors used a descriptive, cross-sectional analysis of each of the 5 years of self-reported research utilisation.

Findings

Wallin *et al* found no significant difference in research utilisation during the first 5 years postgraduation, with an 'upward trend' during years 3–5. The upward trend was not as apparent for persuasive compared with instrumental and conceptual research use. The trend toward increased research use followed an initial 'dip' in utilisation during the first 2 years postgraduation. The authors explained the 'dip' as consistent with reports of 'transition shock' following entry into practice, conceptually reducing new graduates' ability to use research in practice.

Commentary

This research contributes to the body of knowledge concerning nursing graduates' use of research in practice settings during the first 5 years after graduation. The secondary data analyses included rigorous and complex methods to control for reliability and validity, including differences among participants and missing and lost data. The 'trend' towards increased use of research may be relevant in academic settings and in clinical practice, although the results were not statistically significant. One weakness is that the authors provided only one example of the three survey items about types of research use, making it difficult for a reader to assess whether respondents understood the survey questions. However, clinical nurses and experts reviewed the

questions to evaluate feasibility and face validity. The barriers to use of evidence-based practice[3–6] by new nurse graduates were not assessed. More research is needed to evaluate nursing graduates' ability to incorporate evidence into practice and influence clinical change.

Competing interests None.

References

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