



EDITORIAL

Nursing Research: Impact and Prospect

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The beginnings of nursing research can be traced back to Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing who cared for the wounded soldiers during the Crimean war in 1854. Based on her observations, she calculated the mortality rate of soldiers and documented its link to unsanitary conditions, then she implemented clean environmental interventions to reduce mortality and morbidity. After that, not much happened till the early 1900s when nursing organizations and journals started emerging. The topics of research were dictated by the needs at the time, starting with studies on nursing education and the characteristics of nursing students, passing to the functions of nurses and the needed resources with the nursing shortage following World War II, and moving to clinical studies of patients and nursing practice.

The growth of nursing research was driven by the increase in graduate programs in nursing, and the availability of funding agencies, such as Sigma Theta Tau International in 1936 and Nursing Institute of Nursing Research in 1986. Later, research studies started examining the effect of nursing interventions on patient outcomes. The early 21st century witnessed the evidence-based practice movement, where nurses started using research findings in their practice to inform their clinical decisions and improve patient outcomes. With more funding opportunities, dissemination of research and technological advancement, research became more accessible to nurses (Polit & Beck, 2008).

Why is nursing research important? Because it helps develop the knowledge that distinguishes the discipline, provides scientific accountability to practice and leverage its impact on people's health (Polit & Beck, 2008). The

International Council of Nurses (2002) defined nursing as the autonomous and collaborative care of individuals of all ages, families, groups and communities, sick or well, and in all settings. The aims of nursing are the promotion of health, prevention of illness, rehabilitation of the disabled and relief of suffering of dying people. These aims can only be achieved when nursing practice is based on rigorous research that informs nurses in caring for their clients and nurse administrators when dealing with professionals in the health care system. For example, observational studies allowed nurses to characterize and predict phenomena, such as pressure ulcers (Kottner & Coleman, 2023). Experimental studies allowed identification of effective interventions, such as music therapy, to reduce anxiety in surgical patients (Nilsson, 2008) and depression in older adults with dementia (van der Steen et al., 2017); as well as the benefits of kangaroo care (Engler et al., 2002). Nursing research has also shown the association between staffing and nursing education, and hospital mortality in surgical patients (Aiken et al., 2014). The findings of research led to changes in clinical practice and administrative policies.

Where are we today? Despite the increase in research and its dissemination, there is still room for improvement in applying empirical findings to practice. Nursing research and its utilization require human and material resources. Nurses and academicians need training and protected time to engage in research, and academic practice partnerships are needed for research to be relevant and impactful. Funding is needed to ensure quality rigorous studies. With limited financial resources and the position of nursing within the healthcare system, collaboration with other disciplines, such as medicine,

psychology, public health and recently computer science and engineering is becoming more common, as it allows innovation, catching up with scientific advances, and leading to more success in addressing the emerging complex health issues. Yet, what we need also is more intra-disciplinary collaboration in nursing research.

Cross-country research collaboration can provide better knowledge and understanding of common nursing issues. The diversity of cultures must not hinder cross-country studies; rather it would enrich our understanding of nursing phenomena and the people whom we serve. Research conducted by investigators from various countries can provide more resources, larger samples and more data, thus richer and more generalizable knowledge. Of course, challenges in coordination must be addressed, and the implementation of standard protocols must be ensured; however, if the work is planned well, the outcomes will be positive.

What about nursing research in the Arab region? Despite progress, collaboration between nurse researchers across Arab countries seems sub-optimal. One factor may be that many Arab nurses who pursued their doctoral degrees in the US or Europe mostly collaborated with their advisors upon returning home; they often published their research in Western journals to meet promotion and tenure requirements in their countries. Other scholars do publish in local journals. Wehbeh-Alameh et al. (2024) identified 31 active nursing journals in Arab-speaking countries. The majority were open access and came from Egypt, Iraq and the UAE. However, many of these journals are published quarterly or less frequently, and only few of them are indexed in engines like Scopus, PubMed or CINAHL, which limits their accessibility to nursing scholars in the region.

To advance nursing knowledge and practice in our region, the best approach is to have Arab investigators collaborate, and to do that, we need to know about each other's work. Surveys, reviews and bibliometric analyses identified areas and locations of nursing research in the Arab region; the authors recommended the creation of a regional database for nurse researchers and collaboration among them (Abu-Saad Huijjer et al., 2018; Sweileh et al.,

2019). The Scientific Society of Arab Nursing Faculties led by the Dean of Al Zaytoonah University of Jordan/Faculty of Nursing has around 112 members. One of its goals is to promote scientific research and exchange results (<https://arabnursing.org/>). To reach these goals, it conducted scientific meetings and established a Center for Excellence in Nursing Research.

In 2023, the American University of Beirut (AUB)/Hariri School of Nursing was invited to host the Center. The first task that the Center did was to develop a network of Arab nurse researchers. An online survey was sent through the deans of Arab nursing faculties to nurse scholars to assess their primary area(s) of research. Around 300 participants responded, with complete data available from 284 scholars; the majority were from Egypt (52.82%), followed by Jordan (18.66%), then Saudi Arabia (17.79%), Lebanon (5.63%) and Palestine (4.58%). The United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Kuwait and Sudan were each represented by 5 participants or less. The most frequently endorsed research area was non-communicable diseases, including mental health disorders; then critical care; health systems; community and population health; nursing education; maternal child health; communicable diseases; pain and palliative care. The least frequently mentioned areas were disaster management and telehealth. The network of these scholars with their research areas and contact information will be soon published on the Society and AUB's website. Given that these data may not represent all Arab nurse investigators, we invite investigators who did not respond to the survey to contact us to add their information.

Another activity to bring Arab nurse scholars together is a regional research conference planned for October 29 and 30, 2025 at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, in which networking cafes are being planned for investigators to meet and start research collaboration (<https://events.aub.edu.lb/ADVANCINGHEALTHCARESEARCHINTHEARABREGIONTOWARDSACOLLABORATIVENURSINGRESEARCHAGENDA#/>). We hope that these strategies will translate into research collaboration that can help develop and move nursing research in the Arab world to new heights.

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