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Introduction: Nursing Research Project Posters

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Introduction

Nursing Research is an essential component of baccalaureate nursing education (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2008). Registered Nurses are expected to provide evidenced based nursing care to diverse populations in complex, rapidly changing, healthcare systems. Understanding the research process better enables nursing graduates to recognize the relationship between research, theory and practice and apply evidenced based practices to dynamic environments. By engaging in undergraduate research education, students learn to critically evaluate research findings and determine credible sources to inform practices that improve patient outcomes and lower costs. Furthermore, students are better prepared to advocate for ethical research practices and protection of human research subjects. Ultimately, baccalaureate nursing research is a fundamental component of nursing practice, which is “grounded in the translation of current evidence into...practice” (AACN, 2008, p.3).

Nursing 363, Principles of Practice: Research as Foundation for Practice, is a required course in the undergraduate nursing curriculum at Old Dominion University. This course, offered every spring, focuses on the theories and concepts utilized in the scientific investigation of nursing practice. Students are introduced to scientific inquiry in nursing which forms the basis for nursing practice and theory. Through completion of course assignments, students are expected to develop skills that enable them to critique and utilize nursing research in professional nursing practice.

To meet course outcomes, students are required to complete a nursing research project proposal that focuses on the steps of scientific inquiry; seeks and analyzes the prevailing literature on a topic relevant to nursing care; builds basic knowledge for

argumentative writing; and applies fundamentals of team writing, common in the nursing discipline. Students work in groups of four or five to identify a community health issue and develop an original research proposal that addresses the issue. The format and required components for the final project are as follows:

- Abstract
- Introduction with Specific Aims
- Background
- Significance
- Methods (proposed)
- Analysis (proposed)
- Protection of Human Subjects (IRB)

Course resources and pre-project exercises such as steps of the research process, PICO worksheets, concept mapping worksheets, and literature review tables scaffold learning and help students create their research questions, hypotheses and problem statements. Each group is required to complete a PICO worksheet. The letters of the PICO acronym stand for Population or Problem, Intervention, Comparison and Outcome. Completion of the PICO exercise assists students in developing a research question that is relevant to clinical practice and contains the typical components required for scientific study.

Each group also conducts a literature review to gather information on the background and significance of their research problem. With assistance from course faculty and the College of Health Sciences librarian, students are required to access relevant articles and synthesize findings of the available data on their topic. Online tutorials

designed to improve information literacy including accessing, critically evaluating and citing appropriate resources are embedded into the course. These tutorials were developed by ODU libraries and are recommended as a supplemental resource for undergraduate research coursework. This past spring, the librarian assigned to health sciences was added to the course as a course builder enabling her to provide timely advice related to accessing information and library services. The librarian was available to students online via course discussion board, over the phone, and in person for questions and general information.

As a result of the literature search, the research groups were informed on what was known about their topic. Each group was expected to propose a nursing research study that has not yet been conducted and that would potentially contribute to new nursing knowledge. The proposed project must include a methods section specifying the population, sample, sampling plan, exclusion and inclusion criteria, instruments for gathering data, and a description of how the chosen instruments are valid and reliable. In addition, students must include a plan for analysis of the data. Finally, each group must discuss the potential risks and benefits of participating in the study and planned methods for protection of human subjects.

The final products for the research project proposal are a research proposal paper and a research poster. For the poster, students are expected to create a professional poster summarizing the required components of the project. The format is expected to be consistent with the style of scientific research posters in the nursing discipline and should be visually attractive to draw viewers and generate discussion. Students utilize their posters to present their proposals each semester at an annual poster presentation day.

Previously, the poster presentation day was a siloed event with attendance limited primarily to nursing students and faculty. In 2017, faculty from dental hygiene, nursing and counseling services collaborated to develop an interprofessional poster presentation day where “students from two or more professions learn about, from and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes” (World Health Organization, 2010, p. 7). The goal was to embed a coordinated interprofessional activity into existing curricular requirements. Graduate students from the counseling program served as consultants for the nursing student projects. They offered recommendations for counseling services that were applicable to the community health issues targeted in each proposed research project. All three disciplines presented their projects at the poster presentation day that was attended by 167 participants representing from every discipline in the College of Health Sciences. Due to the tremendous success of the event (93% of attendees were satisfied or highly satisfied with the poster presentation day and 91% felt the research topics were relevant or somewhat relevant to their current work), the model was repeated in 2018 with counseling students serving as consultants to the nursing student research proposals. The research posters were presented at the college wide interprofessional education day.

This publication of the Old Dominion University Undergraduate Research (OUR) Journal provides a forum for the students to showcase their work. The online open repository offers global access that enables the students to share their research proposals with a wider audience. This edition of OUR Journal includes digital reproductions of the final nursing research posters presented at the Interprofessional Poster Presentation day

in the spring of 2017 and 2018. The research proposals address multiple community health issues such as illicit drug abuse in homeless adolescents, nutritional habits of school-aged children, and the perceived threat of nitrate-contaminated water in a rural community. From lessons learned from the research proposal projects, students are better equipped to design health promotion projects to improve health knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and the environments of the community.

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