



Straight From the Nurse's Mouth: EBP Knowledge Among Beginning RNs

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Abstract

Evidence-based practice (EBP) is an expectation among health professionals due to its incontrovertible positive impact on patient safety and care quality¹. As a cornerstone of professional nursing, EBP is now a standard of professional performance² and ethical practice³, as well as a core competency for nursing education⁴.

EBP is consistently described as the integration of research evidence, patient preferences and values, and clinician expertise¹. Despite professional agreement regarding its definition and importance, EBP in nursing remains seemingly inadequate⁵. Research into EBP barriers often points to knowledge deficit as a significant contributor to this issue^{1,6,7}. Yet it remains unclear what this "knowledge" entails. While multiple professional organizations and researchers have identified outcomes associated with EBP knowledge^{1,4,8}, the concept of EBP Knowledge in New Nurses is obscure.

A hybrid concept analysis was undertaken to expand the current understanding of EBP knowledge and to form a refined definition of EBP knowledge in new nurses. The outcomes of this concept analysis will enhance the profession's awareness of new nurses' EBP knowledge needs and allow for the development of pre- and post-licensure interventions that improve use of EBP among new nurses.

Method

Hybrid Concept Analysis⁹

- Theoretical Analysis
 - Literature review:
 - What is the nature of EBP knowledge? How is EBP knowledge defined? How is EBP knowledge measured?
 - Instruments designed to measure EBP in nursing.
- Fieldwork
 - University IRB approval
 - Semi-structured interviews with new RNs (n=4)
 - < 12 months experience
 - Baccalaureate degree
 - What is EBP? What knowledge is needed to use EBP? Do you have this knowledge?
- Analytical phase
 - Iterative analysis of theoretical and fieldwork data.

Conclusions

New nurses' evidence-based practice knowledge is a distinct concept defined as ***the fundamental EBP facts and principles that prompt new nurses to ask a clinical question, initiate a search for evidence, and seek help to evaluate research findings.***

New nurses know-*that* EBP involves asking a question, finding evidence, and evaluating research articles for the purpose of improving patient outcomes, but have limited procedural know-*how* associated with these steps the EBP process.

New nurses arrive at their professional roles with sufficient understanding of EBP principles to initiate the EBP process through clinical inquiry.

Implications

Nurse Educators

Foster procedural knowledge ("know how") in addition to propositional knowledge ("know that"); Develop EBP learning goals related to procedural knowledge for formulating searchable clinical questions, searching for evidence, and evaluating evidence.

Nurse Leaders

Value new nurses' curiosity about clinical problems; Model, validate, and encourage new nurses' EBP behaviors.

Nurse Administrators

Ensure new nurses have access to research evidence (e.g. database subscriptions); Consider implementing EBP mentor programs to foster new nurses' EBP knowledge development.

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Results

Theoretical Phase

- EBP knowledge is a domain of EBP competence and is comprised of propositional knowledge (that) and procedural knowledge (how) related to the 5 steps in the EBP process.
- Various measures available for EBP knowledge (n=14)
 - Tend to focus on steps 1-3
 - Do not differentiate between new & experienced RNs



EBP Process	Corresponding Knowledge
1. Ask a clinical question	Know how to construct a question using PICO format.
2. Acquire evidence	Know how to search for literature in a variety of databases.
3. Appraise evidence	Know basic principles of epidemiology and biostatistics.
4. Apply evidence in practice	Know how to synthesize findings and communicate results.
5. Evaluate outcomes	Know how to evaluate the EBP process and its impact within the clinical context in which it was implemented

Fieldwork Phase

New nurses describe EBP knowledge as:

- Distinguishing between tradition-based and evidence-based practice
- Asking "why" – noticing discrepancies and questioning current practices
- Navigating the evidence
 - Accessing research – few resources, limited access
 - Interpreting research – lack of knowledge and skills

Sample Demographics	
Age	23-36 years (mean=27)
Race	Caucasian
Gender	3 female, 1 male
Experience	4.5 wks – 11 mos. (mean=15 wks)
Practice area	NICU, L&D/PP, CVICU, MICU

Analytical Phase

New nurses' descriptions of EBP knowledge are not fully congruent with existing definitions and measures:

- New nurses describe EBP knowledge in terms of EBP steps 1-3
- Both new nurses and instruments tend to overlook EBP steps 4-5
- New nurses ask "why," but not in the form of searchable clinical questions (i.e. PICO)
- New nurses know why, when, and generally where to find evidence, but not how to find or evaluate it.