Utilization of Physical Assessment Techniques by Registered Nurses

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE CHATTANOOGA School of Nursing

Kelli Hand, DNP, MBA, RN; Tessa Mullinax-Baker, MSN, RN, CNL; Rosebelle Peters, MSN, RN,CHSE

BACKGROUND

- Out of 120 assessment skills, 29 (37%) were "never" used, 33 skills (34%) were used "monthly/occasionally," and 25 skills (29%) were used "daily/weekly" (Secrest, Norwood, & DuMont, 2005)
- Out of 126 physical examination techniques, only 30 were core skills utilized by practicing nurses (Gidden, 2007)
- Majority of examination techniques involved inspection and general observation (Gidden, 2007)
- Out of 121 physical assessment techniques, 34% performed routinely, 31% rarely used, 35.5% "not used at all" (Birks, Cant, Ainsley, Chung, & Davis, 2012)
- Out of the 34% of techniques used routinely, only 10.7% were used every shift that a registered nurse (RN) worked (Birks, Cant, Ainsley et al., 2012)
- Out of 133 physical assessment skills, 10 (7.5%) were performed on a regular basis (Osborne, Douglas, Reid, Jones, & Gardner, 2015)

OBJECTIVES

- Identify current physical assessment techniques presented in current assessment textbooks
- Identify frequency of physical assessment techniques performed by practicing RNs in various clinical settings
- Evaluate assessment course content to ensure content reflect assessment techniques being preformed in various clinical settings

DEMOGRAPHICS

Years of Experience:	
<1	1
1-5	28
6-10	9
11-15	3
16-20	1
21-25	2
>26	1
Full Time Employment	44
Part Time Employment	4
Area in Nursing	
Maternal/Infant	5
Outpatient	3
MedSurg	11
Critical Care	8
Preop	1
Emergency	9
Psych	1
Other	11
Highest Degree Earned	
ASN	15
BSN	19
MSN	12
DNP	3
State of Licensure	
TN	39
Other states	10

METHODS

- Survey was developed using four nursing health assessment textbooks
- Compiled list of physical assessment techniques based on physical systems
- 201 assessment techniques were included in survey
- Survey was sent to all alumni with a current email address, all current RN to BSN students, current MSN students in first year, and a convenient sample of practicing RNs
- 90 total participants
- 41 participants partially completed the survey
- 49 participants completed the entire survey
- Data reflects the 49 fully completed surveys

RESULTS

Assessment techniques performed by Registered Nurses based on physical system

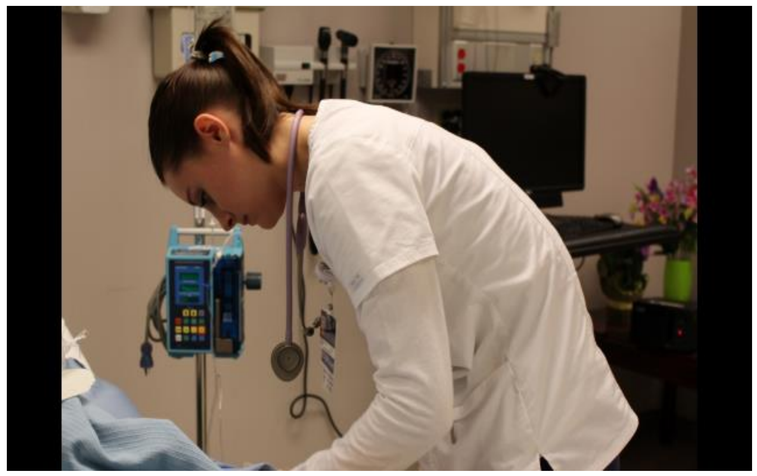
System	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation (SD)
Cardiovascular	2.1494	2.2222	0.71425
Skin, Hair, Nails	2.0517	2.111	0.65788
Peripheral Vascular	1.9272	2	0.65595
Respiratory	1.8221	1.8261	0.63661
Head, Neck, Related Lymphatics	1.7525	1.8333	0.65441
Neurological	1.6349	1.625	0.60813
Abdomen	1.5819	1.6	0.716
Eye	1.5465	1.6	0.65062
Musculoskeletal	1.4703	1.4565	0.87319
Ears, Nose, Mouth, Throat	1.2389	1.0588	0.68582
Breast	0.9684	0.9375	0.88819

- 201 total assessment techniques
- 67 assessment techniques utilized daily by 50% or greater of RNs surveyed
- 33.3% of skills surveyed are being utilized on a daily basis by 50% or more of registered nurses
- 94 assessment techniques utilized daily or weekly by 50% or greater by RNs surveyed
- 46.8% of skills surveyed are being utilized on a daily or weekly basis
- 100 assessment techniques not utilized by 25% or greater of RNs surveyed
- 49.8% of skills surveyed never completed by 25% or more of registered nurses.

System	# of technique questions asked	# of techniques completed daily by 50% or greater	# of techniques completed daily or weekly by 50% or greater	# of techniques that are never completed by 25% or greater
Cardiovascular	9	7	8	2
Skin, Hair, Nails	18	10	13	4
Peripheral Vascular	15	9	10	4
Respiratory	23	11	12	9
Head, Neck, Related Lymphatics	19	4	10	6
Neurological	16	6	7	9
Abdomen	20	7	8	11
Eye	16	6	7	10
Musculoskeletal	23	1	10	13
Ears, Nose, Mouth, Throat	34	6	9	24
Breast	8	0	0	8

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Results support previous research and suggest that current undergraduate assessment course content should be adjusted to reflect current practice
- Nursing programs can prioritize course content based on assessment techniques utilized by 50% or greater of practicing RNs daily or weekly
- Nurse educators can structure teaching based on high frequency techniques
- Avoid continued focus on assessment techniques that are never performed
- Prepare students for the current workforce, as generalist, who are confident and competent in preforming high frequency assessment techniques
- Ensure students have a solid assessment foundation for higher education and advanced practice



LIMITATIONS

- Physical techniques pertaining to the female and male genitalia and rectum were not included in this study. These techniques are not currently included in our current health assessment skills system
- Convenience sample was utilized
- Participants located in Southeast United States
- Length of survey: 201 questions
- Half of all participants that started the survey completed the entire survey
- Data based only off of participants that completed the entire survey

REFERENCES

Birks, M., Cant, R., Ainsley, J. Chung, C., & Davis, J. (2012). The use of physical assessment skills by registered nurses in Australia: Issues for nursing education. *Collegian*, 134, 1-7. doi: 10.1016/j.colegn.2012.02.004

D'Amico, D. & Barbarito, C. (2016). *Health and physical assessment in nursing* (3rd ed.) Hoboken, NJ: Pearson

Giddens, J. F. (2007). A survey of physical assessment techniques performed by RNs: Lessons for nursing education. *Journal of Nursing Education, 46*(2), 83-87

Jensen, S. (2015). *Nursing Health Assessment: A Best Practice Approach* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer Health

Osborne, S., Douglas, C., Jones, L., & Gardner, G. (2015). The primacy of vital signs- Acute care nurses' and midwives' use of physical assessment skills: A cross sectional study. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 52, 951-962. doi: 10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2015.01.014

Secrest, J. A., Norwood, B. R., & Dumont, P. M. (2005). Physical assessment skills: A descriptive study of what is taught and what is practiced. *Journal of Professional Nursing, 21*(2), 114-118

Weber, J. R. & Kelley, J. H. (2014). *Health Assessment in Nursing* (5th ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins

Wilson, S. F. & Giddens, J. F. (2013). *Health Assessment for Nursing Practice* (5th ed.). St. Louis, MO: Mosby Elsevier

RESEARCH POSTER PRESENTATION DESIGN © 2015
www.PosterPresentations.com