

Title:

SPECIAL SESSION: A Program of Primary Care Nursing Research in Australia

Type:

Oral

Keywords:

Nursing workforce, Primary care nursing and Research program

Description/Overview:

The nursing workforce in Australian primary care has grown exponentially in the last 15 years. This presentation will discuss the research program that has evolved in conjunction with this workforce growth to support nursing education, health policy, and clinical practice.

Abstract Text:

The program of research detailed in this presentation centres on the Australian primary care nursing workforce, chronic disease and lifestyle risk factor reduction, and mixed methods research. This presentation will demonstrate how this program has developed in concert with the evolution of the Australian primary care nursing workforce over the last fifteen years.

Since the advent of this research program in 2003, the number of nurses employed in Australian general practice has grown from 2,349 to over 12,000 nurses. This rapid evolution of the Australian primary care nursing workforce in what was historically a solo medical context and the unique small business environment of Australian general practice has created a number of workforce issues. This research program has emphasised the important contribution that nurses in general practice can make to the delivery of evidence-based health care within the community. Research around a range of professional and workforce issues including; exploring the nursing role and the barriers and facilitators to practice, job satisfaction, advanced clinical practice and understanding the professional practice environment will be explored.

The growth in the Australian primary care nursing workforce has also created a need to develop an evidence base for nurse led interventions. This has been particularly important given the limited evidence for such interventions internationally until recent years. The emphasis of work within this research program has been chronic disease and lifestyle risk factor reduction to fit with national health priorities and an area of growing need in the community based setting. Work in this aspect of the research program has encompassed exploratory studies that have sought to better understand the consumer or health professionals' experiences, levels of satisfaction and attitudes, as well as intervention studies which have provided outcome data to demonstrate the impact of the various interventions on health outcomes.

Underpinning the primary care nursing elements of the research program has been a pragmatic philosophy, ensuring that the most appropriate research methods have been used to generate answers to the complex research questions that have been faced. This has led to the development of scholarly discourse around the implementation and conduct of mixed methods research in nursing.

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Content Outline:

I. Introduction

1. Primary care nursing workforce
2. Chronic disease management and lifestyle risk reduction
3. Mixed methods research

II. Body

Main Point #1 Primary care nursing workforce

Supporting point #1 – Primary care nursing roles

1. *Scope of practice versus roles in practice*
2. *Barriers and facilitators to the primary care nursing role*

Supporting point #2 – Professional issues

1. *Undergraduate preparation*
2. *Transition of experienced nurses*
3. *Wages and conditions*
4. *Continuing professional development*
5. *Job satisfaction*

Main Point #2 Chronic disease management and lifestyle risk reduction

Supporting point #1 – Exploratory descriptive studies

1. *Consumer knowledge, attitudes, experiences, satisfaction*
2. *Health professionals – collaboration, confidence, clinical skills*

Supporting point #2 – Intervention studies

1. *Health screening, clinical data management*
2. *Reduction of lifestyle risk factors*

Main Point #3 Mixed methods research

Supporting point #1 – Pragmatic approach to address complex research problems

Supporting point #2 – Scholarly discourse around methodological approach

1. Mixed methods designs and approaches
2. Methods of integration
3. Evaluating mixed methods studies

III. Conclusion

1. There is value in building a coherent body of work for both the researcher and the profession.
2. Advocacy and leadership based on strong research evidence can ensure that nurses inform policy and research within multidisciplinary health settings.
3. Nurses need to actively engage in multidisciplinary teams to bring the professional lens of nursing to the table.

Organizer

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Professional Experience: 2013- Professor of Primary Health Care Nursing (Permanent Full-time) School of Nursing, University of Wollongong 2011-2013 Associate Professor University of Western Sydney 2007-2011 Senior Lecturer, School of Nursing & Midwifery, College of Health & Science, University of Western Sydney Author or coauthor of 113 peer reviewed papers and 107 conference presentations mostly related to primary care nursing.

Author Summary: Professor Elizabeth Halcomb is Professor of Primary Health Care Nursing at University of Wollongong. She is an experienced academic nurse leader who is an active supervisor of research students and teaches into postgraduate coursework. Professor Halcomb leads a strong research program in primary care nursing, with particular emphasis on nursing in general practice, chronic disease and nursing workforce issues. She also undertakes research around learning and teaching in nursing, academic workforce development and research methodology.