



# Pacific Rim International Journal of Nursing Research

---

---

## Editorial:

### Building a Program of Research

In order for nursing to continue to advance as a profession, a continual development of research is needed. However, many nurses who are required, as part of their professional performance, to be involved in conducting research projects are at a loss regarding how to develop an ongoing program of research. This creates a problem for the continual development of nursing science. Thus, the purpose of this editorial is to provide some basic guidelines that nurse researchers need to consider as they journey along their paths of research interest.

A program of research can be defined as an area of concern that addresses an important health issue that is relevant to the public. As one selects and develops a program of research it must be: a topic to which the researcher has passion and commitment; designed to build on prior knowledge; related to the improvement of health care outcomes; grounded in theory; and, linked to appropriate and rigorous research methods.

A program of nursing research may be generated from several sources, such as one's: review of the literature; clinical practice; life experiences; and/or belief system. Any one or a combination of these sources can prove helpful in creating a program of research. However, one needs to examine what is truly of interest, to him/her, so that interest can and will be sustained over time. Creating a program of research is not a linear process, but one that involves repetition. A researcher may see new knowledge being created in small increments or quantum leaps. Whatever the process, the outcomes of each component of a program of research may be somewhat unpredictable. However, a nurse researcher sustains his/her program of research by building on his/her prior research, as well as generating new knowledge for nursing science.

According to Hulley and colleagues,<sup>1</sup> there are five aspects of a program of research that must exist, which include: feasibility, interest, innovation, ethics, and relevance. Regarding feasibility, a researcher needs to ask: "Is the research program feasible?" and "Can the research program be accomplished?" Questions to ask, regarding interest and innovation, would be: "Is the program of research of interest to me and others?" and "Is the program of research innovative/novel?" Questions related to ethics and relevance, that a researcher should ask himself/herself include: "Is the research ethical and do the risks outweigh the benefits for participants?" and "Is the research program relevant to nursing, health care in general, patient outcomes, cost, and other relevant variables?" If one's program of research is to be sustainable, the answers to each of these questions need to be a resounding "yes."

Finally, there are general approaches<sup>2</sup> that a nurse researcher needs to take into consideration when developing a program of research, including:

1. *Having a passion for the area of research interest.* In other words, a researcher must understand, in detail, all aspects of the area in which he/she intends to have a program of research, as well as have a passion for the work involved. Otherwise, the program of research will not be sustained and the researcher will find the work unpleasant and laborious.

2. *Ensuring a high public health significance of the area of interest.* This means that a researcher's area of interest must have significance to the public that will be served by the findings. If the area of interest has little significance to the health of the public, the researcher may find difficulty in obtaining funding.
3. *Knowing the literature related to the area of interest.* This involves an in-depth, continuous, and up-to-date understanding of the literature published on the researcher's area of interest. A good researcher always will read the most current publications related to his/her program of study.
4. *Understanding clinical practice in the area of interest.* This means the nurse researcher must be up-to-date on all aspects of health care delivery related to his/her program of research. As new research findings are published, a scholarly researcher will be aware of how these findings may or may not relate to his/her program of research.
5. *Understanding the potential outcomes of the program of research.* Understanding the potential outcomes of one's program of research can help to strengthen each study that is developed in the research program. Outcomes can have a direct effect on research funding, as well as how well the research findings are received by other scholars in the area of interest.
6. *Building the program of research from study to study.* Each study needs to build, in some way, on previous work the researcher has done. Most studies open up new questions and avenues for examination. These questions and avenues can assist in developing a researcher's next study.
7. *Working with interdisciplinary colleagues.* Working with colleagues in other fields can assist in strengthening one's program of research. Using colleagues from other disciplines can help to broaden the various aspects of interest that can be addressed in a single research study. In addition, scholars from various disciplines may look at an area of interest in slightly different ways.
8. *Publishing research findings.* A researcher always must publish, as soon as possible, the findings of a study. No researcher should wait months or years to begin to prepare a manuscript for submission to a journal. Timeliness is of essence! No one will be interested in old, dated information. In addition, if the research findings are not published, no one will be able to apply the outcomes of the research.

Developing a program of research is not an easy task, especially for the novice researcher. However, it is a necessary task for nurses to undertake. A program of research allows for the creation of knowledge that has depth and breadth. In addition, developing a program of research prevents one from continually trying to re-invent him/herself or an area of research interest.

**Vickie A. Lambert, DNSc, RN, FAAN**

**Clinton E. Lambert, PhD, RN, CS, FAAN**

**Editors: Pacific Rim International Journal of Nursing Research**

1. Hulley S, Cummings S, Browner W, Grady D, Newman T. *Designing clinical research.* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Philadelphia (PA): Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2001.
2. Holzemer W. Building a program of research. *Jpn J Nurs Sci.* 2009; 6:1-5.