



# ACN position statement

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## NURSING RESEARCH POSITION STATEMENT

### Background:

Nursing perspectives play an important role in addressing the health priorities of today's society. The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) acknowledges the significant contribution that nursing research has made since the first nurse researcher, Florence Nightingale, documented the factors that affected the morbidity and mortality of soldiers wounded in the Crimean war in the 1800s. The nursing profession continues to celebrate the significant contribution nursing research has made to improving nursing practice and health outcomes. These significant contributions over recent years include, but are not limited to:

1. health services research that has demonstrated the importance of nursing services and how such services are designed/organised to ensure safety and quality of care<sup>1-3</sup>
2. clinical research that has demonstrated the value of specific nursing interventions to improved health outcomes, including enhanced survival, reduced morbidity, and improved quality of life and consumer engagement<sup>4-8</sup>
3. basic science research that has advanced discoveries in terms of understanding the biological mechanisms underpinning nursing interventions<sup>9-12</sup>
4. epidemiological research that has advanced understanding about how individuals and populations respond to health problems<sup>13</sup>
5. qualitative research that has advanced understanding about experiences of and responses to health and illness and the processes of care that are important to optimal outcomes<sup>14, 15</sup>.

### Definition and key statements:

1. Nursing research is scientific inquiry (qualitative and quantitative) designed to develop knowledge about health and well-being. It is essential for the nursing profession to strengthen its research culture and support evidence-based nursing practice, to optimise the health and well-being of people and society. To achieve this goal, the nursing research endeavour must be:
  - important to consumers, healthcare professionals and policy makers
  - responsive to issues consumers identify in the context of nursing and health practice<sup>6</sup>
  - offer the best available evidence as a basis for changing established practice and improving nursing and health care
  - exposed to critical appraisal and review, internally and externally to the profession
  - encouraging of distinct avenues of inquiry into nursing phenomena taking into account previous research findings
  - connected with the wider national and global professional community
  - collaborative with other disciplines
  - influencing of clinical nursing practice by actively promoting research and its application in practice environments
  - either nursing-specific, or conducted as part of an interprofessional team.
2. Evidence-based practice is the integration of best available research evidence with clinical expertise and patient values to facilitate clinical decision making<sup>16</sup>. It signifies high quality and professional nursing care. All

nurses have a role in research and development of practice; therefore, building the research capabilities of all nurses is a prerequisite for evidence-based nursing practice.

3. All research methods, quantitative, qualitative, mixed-method designs, evaluative studies and clinical audits, in nursing research contribute to the evidence base for nursing.
4. All research activities must meet prevailing international standards for research including ethical conduct of research for researchers and participants. The ACN endorses the National Health and Medical Research Council's National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research<sup>17</sup> and Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes<sup>18</sup>.
5. The ACN has a proactive responsibility to promote nursing research by advocating and engaging in public policy and decision-making processes concerning issues related to nursing research.

#### **ACN recommends:**

1. Lack of research skills is a key barrier for clinical nursing research and evidence-based nursing practice<sup>19, 20</sup>. All clinical sectors should be equipped with an appropriate level of infrastructure support to facilitate clinical nursing research<sup>21-23</sup>. A range of roles including professorial chairs<sup>24</sup>, university-based nurse researchers who hold research fellow status<sup>25</sup>, and nurse researchers in the clinical setting<sup>20, 26</sup> support nurses engaging in research.
2. The National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council and other funding bodies should continue to recognise the need to support the research effort of nursing. Appropriate qualified and experienced nurse researchers are integral to review processes for nursing research. These processes should be equitable and robust, and constantly reviewed to identify and eliminate potential biases.
3. ACN strongly recommends a national Australian entity that seeks to advance nursing science by supporting and sponsoring research concerning the science of health, which focuses on promoting health and quality of life<sup>27</sup>.
4. Standards of practice for nurses should continue to emphasise the importance of registered nurses being evidence-based practitioners, who are competent in practising within an evidenced-based framework to provide quality and safe nursing care<sup>28</sup>.
5. Nursing research is integrated into all undergraduate and postgraduate nursing courses to (i) build research capability, (ii) promote the role of and contribution of nurses to evidence-based practice, and (iii) engender that understanding of the critical role of research in practice development. Courses that prepare nurses for practice should include appropriate learning experiences and be taught by experienced and active researchers.
6. Nursing research should be a core part of all health research centres.
7. Nurses should collaborate with research organisations that promote evidenced-based practice, such as the Cochrane Collaboration, to promote, generate and utilise evidence in nursing practice<sup>22</sup>.

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