

RUA: Topic Search Strategy

Chamberlain College of Nursing

NR 449: Evidenced Based Practice

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Clinical Question

For my RUA, I was asked to research unsafe staffing levels and the impact on patient safety. This topic has been very popular in recent years within the state of Ohio. The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center made a move in 2017 to take a stand against unsafe staffing ratios after there were cuts to nursing staff and an increase in the nurse to patient ratio. As one nurse who works at OSUWMC states “when you cut staffing and you expect a nurse to care for multiple ICU patients, you're jeopardizing our ability to safely protect them and get them the care they need in a timely manner” (McEntyre, 2017). Also, the Ohio Nurses Association (ONA) has been speaking out on the issue recently and is working with state legislators to work towards a mandating safer staffing ratios.

Research shows that “there is a strong relationship between nurse staffing, including both the number of nurses and the mix of competent nurses, and patient safety”. It has also shown that “higher RN staffing levels were associated with lower rates of healthcare-associated pneumonia, failure to rescue, and healthcare-associated bloodstream infections” (Mennella, Karakashian, 2017). Shekelle (2013) says that in a study comparing staffing levels at 8:1 vs. 4:1, “there were 1 to 5 fewer deaths per 1000 inpatient days with more nurse staffing per patient”. Using the PICO method is way to formulate an organized and concise research question. PICO stands for population, intervention, comparison, and outcome. My PICO question is as follows:

Population: Patients in a hospital (inpatient unit)

Intervention: lower nurse staffing ratios

Comparison: higher nurse staffing ratios

Outcome: improved patient outcomes

In a hospital setting, do lower nurse staffing ratios compared to higher nurse staffing ratios improve patient outcomes? The purpose of this paper is to explore the risks and benefits of higher nurse staffing ratios versus low nurse staffing ratios.

Levels of Evidence

For this paper I used both qualitative and quantitative research, meaning I used a mixed method. With qualitative research, “reality is constructed by the individual” and with quantitative research “reality is objective and can be seen and measured” (Houser, 2018). Qualitative research is defined as “a naturalistic approach to research in which the focus is on understanding the meaning of an experience from the individual’s perspective” (Houser, 2018). Examples of qualitative research that were used for this paper were patient interviews regarding patient satisfaction and nurse interviews regarding job satisfaction. Quantitative research is defined as “a traditional approach to research in which variables are identified and measured in a reliable and valid way” (Houser, 2018). Examples of quantitative research are measurements and statistical information, which can be found throughout my project. A mixed method is a combination of quantitative research and qualitative research and “involves the description of the measurable state of a phenomenon and the individual’s subjective response to it” (Houser 2018).

Search Strategy

To find my sources, I began with the Chamberlain library database and eventually went on to Google Scholar. Often times it is easier to find articles that are reliable and that can be considered primary sources from databases that are considered proprietary, or accessible via subscription, than from databases that have open access. In the search bar I typed different things such as “how staffing ratios affect patient safety” and “how nursing staffing ratios affect patient outcomes”, and even used Boolean operators such as “staffing ratios AND patient safety”, etc.

As I was going through the results of all of these searches I took into consideration the country in which they were published as I wanted to make my sources applicable to the United States and I also took into consideration what year they were published as I wanted to ensure that my resources were still accurate and relevant. Also, it is best practice to use the most recent works possible as research is always evolving, unless using a seminal work (Houser, 2018).

I chose *Nurse-Patient Ratios as a Patient Safety Strategy: A Systemic Review* (Shekelle, 2013) and *Nurse Staffing and Patient Safety: Shiftwork* (Mennella, Karakashian, 2017). The article by Shekelle was a great article utilizing a mixed method research design. The article was based off of the observation that perhaps mortality rates were so high during and immediately after hospitalization because the care received within the hospital was not as good as it should have been due to higher nursing staff ratios. Shekelle then went into statistics supporting his claim. The article by Mennella and Karakashian was strictly quantitative research which stated many pieces of statistical information supporting their claims on not only staffing ratios but overtime and 12-hours shifts.

Conclusion

For my RUA, I researched unsafe staffing levels and the impact on patient safety. To make a concise research question, I used the PICO method (population, intervention, comparison, outcome): In a hospital setting, do lower nurse staffing ratios compared to higher nurse staffing ratios improve patient outcomes? This has been a hot topic within the state of Ohio as The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center (OSUWMC), a large medical system in central Ohio, and the Ohio Nurses Association (ONA) have both taken a stance on the issue and it has been a topic brought to the attention of state legislators.

For my paper, I used a mixed method of research, meaning I used both quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research is factual and statistical and qualitative research is subjective and found through interviews and observations. I found my sources through the Chamberlain Library database, a proprietary database, and Google Scholar, an open access database. I did many different searches and even utilized Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT). I went through each source and took note of the country and year in which it was published. I stuck to articles published within the last 5 years in the United States as I wanted to ensure the article was accurate, relevant, and applicable to situations in the United States.

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