



HPNA Position Statement

Role of Hospice and Palliative Nurses in Research

Background

Research is the foundation for excellent palliative nursing care.¹ The conduct and the use of research are powerful tools for advancing the science of nursing, ensuring quality care, and improving patient and family outcomes.² Currently, there is an emphasis on patient centered outcomes research, which is consistent with the focus of palliative nursing.³ The *Future of Nursing Report* emphasized the role of the nurse as powerful leaders in interprofessional groups and nurses becoming powerful influencers of change.⁴ The evidence base for palliative nursing depends upon rigorous interdisciplinary research, in which palliative nurses play multiple and varied roles.⁵ All nurses providing direct care to hospice and palliative care patients should be centrally involved in generating and applying research findings.

By virtue of their education and clinical expertise, nurses are uniquely prepared to play crucial roles in research.⁶ The *Palliative Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice* includes participation in research as a standard of professional performance.⁷ Nurses should actively participate in research activities to the fullest extent of their education and training.⁴ Such activities may include:

- Promoting a climate of clinical inquiry and research
- Participating as a member of a research team working on palliative care issues
- Discussing the implications of research with patients and families
- Disseminating palliative care research and journal articles through presentation, publications, consultations, case discussions, and journal clubs
- Implementing evidence-based practice in palliative nursing and palliative care
- Participating in data collection for palliative research
- Identifying and formulating nursing-related problems sensitive to nursing interventions and palliative care research
- Participating in the informed consent process for palliative research
- Critically analyzing, critiquing, and interpreting research for possible application to practice

- Synthesizing research for other health care providers
- Incorporating research findings in the development of clinical nursing policies, procedures, and standards of practice for patient and family care

Doctoral education provides the knowledge and skills to conceptualize questions for theory-driven or theory-building research, to design studies that ensure internal and external validity or trustworthiness, and to translate findings into clinical practice. However, in addition to well-trained nurse scientists, nurses providing care every day to patients and families with serious and life-threatening illnesses are integral to generating the evidence and translating it into patient and family-centered care. Nurses are crucial to identifying important issues, facilitating data collection, and providing feedback regarding how the research may be most useful to clinical practice.

Regardless of where nurses practice (e.g., home, hospice, hospital) they can contribute systematic and thoughtful observations about patients and families to the interdisciplinary research process. Nurses, by virtue of their being with patients and families more than any other discipline, provide valuable input to designing, implementing, and evaluating practice-based studies.

Nurses also play a critical role in the success of research data collection. They can be both sensitive to patient and family needs while still encouraging participation in research activities. They can help investigators identify recruitment and data collection methods which have the least impact on practice routines and the energy levels of patients and families.

Patients and families should receive care that is based on the best available scientific knowledge.² Nurses play an important role in the interpretation of research findings. Local, regional, and national professional meetings serve as important opportunities for clinicians and researchers to discuss the validity and usefulness of research findings together. Such cross-fertilization is essential to the growth of research that is meaningful to practice.

Position Statement

It is the position of HPNA that nurses are important leaders in both professional and interprofessional groups to influence change. HPNA promotes the role of the nurse in hospice and palliative research to promote patient centered outcomes. The nurse has an essential role to identifying critical clinical issues and perspective that would benefit from research and provide vital perspectives related to the appropriateness of the research design for the clinical question and patient population.

Education

- All hospice and palliative nurses should continuously improve their skills in the critical evaluation and translation of research findings.

Clinical Practice

- Hospice and palliative nurses should apply intellectual curiosity to their clinical observations.

Leadership

- Hospice and palliative nurses should actively participate in discussions of new research findings at local, regional, and national professional meetings.

Research

- Palliative nursing research must be patient-centered and related to nursing practice to be useful for building the evidence base for care.
- All hospice and palliative nurses, regardless of their education or credentials, have important roles in patient and family-centered research.
- All interdisciplinary palliative research teams should include members who are actively engaged in clinical practice.
- Hospice and palliative nurses should play a key role on interdisciplinary research teams to ensure studies are ethical in the recruitment of very sick patients and their families.

Definition of Terms (Refer to the HPNA Definition of Terms Document)

Evidence-Based Practice: “The integration of best research evidence with clinical expertise and patient values”⁸ p. ii Specifically in nursing, evidence-based practice is a integration of patient-centered care, interdisciplinary collaboration, with the integration of the best research with clinical expertise and patient value for optimum care.⁹

Patient-Centered Outcomes Research: “Helps people make informed health care decisions, and improves health care delivery and outcomes, by producing and promoting high integrity, evidence-based information that comes from research guided by patients, caregivers and the broader health care community.”³

References

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This position statement reflects the bioethics standards or best available clinical evidence at the time of writing or revisions.

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HPNA Mission Statement:
To advance expert care in serious illness