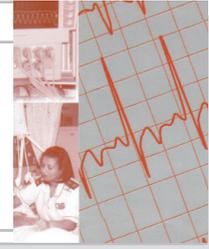


2006 profile of postgraduate critical care nursing research in South Africa



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Aim. The aim of the study was to compile a profile of postgraduate critical care nursing research completed during 2006 in the nursing departments of South African universities, and to determine the extent to which this research contributes to the development of a unique body of specialist South African nursing knowledge.

Method. The critical care nursing programme leader at each university completed an electronic questionnaire.

Results. A total of 16 critical care master's projects (but no doctorate projects) were completed. Completed projects came from only 7 of the 10 universities that offer a postgraduate programme in critical care nursing. To date, only 1 of the projects (6.3%) has been published and 3 (18.8%) have been presented at a national critical care congress.

Conclusion. The number and focus of the 2006 projects are comparable with the 2000 - 2005 profile. Research dissemination from South African postgraduate critical care nursing research remains poor.

A significant number of critical care nursing research studies are undertaken each year at postgraduate level in South Africa. However, no generally available profile exists of this research, nor is it generally known if and where this research is published and/or presented. Given the current challenges to critical care, it is important that the profile of critical care nursing research, the extent to which this research is communicated to the critical care community, and the communication channels used, are determined. One of the objectives of the Clinical Trials Group of the Critical Care Society of Southern Africa is to establish and maintain a database of postgraduate critical care nursing research.

Method

The aim of the study was to compile a profile of postgraduate critical care nursing research completed during 2006 in the nursing departments of South African universities, and to determine the extent to which this research contributes to the development of a unique body of specialist South African nursing knowledge. The objectives were therefore to:

- document the number of projects completed at master's and doctorate levels, respectively
- compare the 2006 completed projects with the 2000 - 2005 profile of completed postgraduate critical care nursing projects
- document at which national and international forums the research was presented

- document in which publications the research was published.

A quantitative research design was used. Ethics approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand.

A purposeful sampling method was used in this study. The sample consisted of all universities that offer a postgraduate programme in critical care nursing, and all postgraduate research projects that were completed during 2006. The respective critical care nursing postgraduate programme leaders at each university were asked to complete a 'Participant's Information and Consent' form. Only the nursing departments that consented were included in the study.

The critical care nursing programme leader at each university completed an electronic questionnaire which requested the following information:

- title of each research project completed during the study period
- final submission date
- whether the research completed was for a master's or doctorate programme
- focus of the research (e.g. clinical, education, management)
- whether the research was published and details thereof
- whether the research was presented and details thereof.

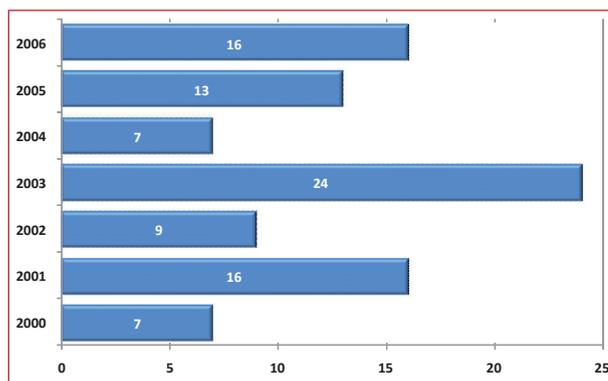


Fig. 1. Number of completed postgraduate projects.

results of this study – and the previous profile – was that completed research is not disseminated to the critical care community nationally or internationally. Only 1 project (6.3%) was published in the *South African Journal of Critical Care*. This journal is not indexed by international databases and therefore has a limited exposure. Three of the completed projects (18.8%) were presented at an annual national CCSSA congress. It is of concern that none was presented internationally.

As nurses in South Africa, we are tasked in our current Scope of Practice² and new proposed legislation (The Nursing Charter)³ to undertake and implement research in our clinical practice.

Communication (publication and presenting) of research results is the first step in research dissemination. However, the real challenge of successful research dissemination is its implementation in practice.^{4,5} Translating research results into practice is the basis

of evidence-based practice.⁶ A vast amount of valuable international multidisciplinary critical care research is available that can be incorporated into South African critical care nursing practice. However, it is essential that local practice should include evidence from South African research to address the country's specific needs.

A question that arises – and which was not addressed in this study – is that, if postgraduate research is so poorly communicated to the critical care community, to what extent have the results from these projects influenced, and been implemented in, practice?

Conclusion

The value of research without dissemination of the findings is questionable. Research dissemination from South African postgraduate critical care nursing research remains poor. This study is an attempt to facilitate partial dissemination of completed research to the South African critical care community.

Note. The information presented in this article was provided to the author by the respective universities. If any of the information presented is not fully correct or up to date, I apologise in advance and ask that readers assist me in updating the respective data.

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