

COMMENTARY ON “NURSING RESEARCH PRIORITIES IN THE PEDIATRIC EMERGENCY CARE APPLIED RESEARCH NETWORK (PECARN): REACHING CONSENSUS THROUGH THE DELPHI METHOD”



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Nursing research, which refers to research about nurses or research conducted by nurses, is critical to our evidence-based profession. To describe and improve nursing practice requires a ground-up understanding of the problems that are disciplinary in nature, as well as those that are practice specific. In this issue of the *Journal of Emergency Nursing*, Frankenberger et al¹ discuss the importance of nurse-driven research, the Delphi method as a means to setting priorities, and the findings of their study.

Frankenberger et al¹ report that currently, no systematic efforts have assessed priorities for nursing research in pediatrics. Their study, “Nursing Research Priorities in the Pediatric Emergency Care Applied Research Network (PECARN): Reaching Consensus Through the Delphi Method,” seeks to address this gap in knowledge and provide some direction for nursing research around pediatric emergency care.

The Delphi method is a very useful methodology for reaching consensus on a variety of issues; it is often used in research to develop priorities for research agendas. It allows for the structured identification of needs, the ranking of needs, and the calculation of rank by consensus, allowing for participants with different perspectives to reach agreement on priorities.² In this case, Frankenberger et al¹ used a sample of emergency nurses from the PECARN to develop a list of priorities using this method.

The questions used in the first round of this study are especially useful:

Please think about your everyday clinical practice and the patients and families for whom you care. What are the most important clinical issues that you would like to see addressed through nursing research?

There are workforce factors (examples: staffing, scheduling, environment) that affect your clinical care. Question: What are the most important workforce issues that you would like to see addressed through nursing research?

These questions are broad enough to allow for a wide variety of responses, which is desirable in the first round, and allow for the different perspectives to be brought forward for consideration. These 2 initial questions are focused clearly on the clinical concerns of nurses for patients, but they also allow for the connection of clinical concerns and problems to the workplace environment in which they take place. Subsequent rounds narrow the list, so it is important to have many concerns in the initial phase.

The authors' findings confirm the necessity of inquiry in the areas of sepsis, triage processes, staffing, workload, and workplace environment. It could be argued that these areas are really parts of the same problem; the prompt recognition of sepsis requires that staffing and workload are adequate, that the workplace environment supports good clinical decision making, and that triage processes support both the education and continued training of emergency nurses as well as an environment that allows for thorough assessment at the initial encounter.

Implications for Emergency Nurses

The use of the Delphi method to come to consensus on priorities for research is effective and inclusive of differing perspectives. It allows also for the priorities of a group to

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come to the forefront, and in the case of Frankenberger et al,¹ identifies the commonality of practice issues requiring further inquiry. The priorities identified in this study align generally with work being done by the Emergency Nursing Research staff and Advisory Council at the Emergency Nurses Association, as well as others.

The results of this study can also be viewed with an eye to its limitations, namely that PECARN hospitals tend to be academic institutions, with more focus on and engagement with research; replicating this study in non-PECARN emergency departments may

yield different results that focus more on educational gaps.

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