

# Advancing Professional Practice Through a Research and Evidence-based Practice Festival

*Kara Mangold, DNP, RN-BC, CCTN, CNE, and Noël Arring, DNP, PhD, RN, OCN*



There are many reasons why health care organizations should focus on internal and external dissemination of evidence-based practice (EBP) and research. Increasing internal dissemination of evidence-based practice projects can reduce duplication of effort, increase internal dissemination of best

practices, and sustain a culture of evidence-based practice.<sup>1</sup> Similar reasons can be applied to external dissemination. In addition, external dissemination can increase your organization's presence in the community and nationally while adding to the body of nursing evidence, which can aid patients across the care continuum.<sup>2</sup>

This is an exemplar from a southwestern academic medical center that has ambulatory, specialty, and acute care services. The department of nursing (DON) has 2,400 staff, 76% are RNs, and 74% of the RNs have their BSN or higher. The push for internal and external dissemination aligned with the organization's declaration to start on the Journey to Magnet Excellence. At the start of this journey, a manager of nursing research was hired and charged with making sure that the organization was able to meet the Magnet standards for new knowledge and innovation. The Magnet standards highlight the importance of EBP and having nurse leaders and clinical nurses involved in projects that drive to nurse-sensitive indicators.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, these standards underscore the importance of clinical nurses disseminating their work internally and externally. At this same time, the organization's EBP model incorporated dissemination as the final step of the EBP process.

The initial assessment of the nurse manager revealed that within the DON, there were multiple projects in various stages, and there was no platform to share ongoing and completed projects. This lack of communication led to limited coordination of projects, duplication of effort, and a lack of understanding of what worked and what did not work. Additionally, the DON had no mechanism for tracking projects, whether in development, presented internally, or if they were being presented externally. To address these gaps, the manager proposed holding an annual internal festival that would highlight the importance of sharing and disseminating results. The festival aimed to increase knowledge of current projects in the DON; support novice presenters; and increase the confidence of nursing staff to present. Additionally, presenters would be encouraged to develop their presentations for external audiences. The plan for the festival was presented to the Nursing Executive Committee (NEC) where it was endorsed and allocated funding.

This exemplar reviews key strategies for implementing a successful festival which include attention to festival format and logistics, identifying areas for refinement and growth, and monitoring outcomes. Additionally, this exemplar identifies lessons learned and implications for nurse leaders.

## FESTIVAL FORMAT AND LOGISTICS

The festival is formatted to mimic processes nurses will experience at national conferences. It is also designed to engage clinical nurses throughout the process, including general planning, abstract review, acting as session moderators, and providing assistance during the festival. Festival planning is led by the manager for nursing research and a nursing education specialist (NES). The planning team also includes members of the Nursing Research Steering Committee, these members represent all areas of the DON and are charged with conducting DON reviews (scientific, grants, publication, and presentations). The festival timeline is presented in [Figure 1](#).

### Abstract Process

A call for abstracts goes out 5 months before the festival with a 2-month window to submit abstracts. Projects at any

stage are encouraged. Teams with an idea for a project can submit an abstract with a PICO (Patient/Problem, Intervention, Comparison, and Outcome) question and literature review; completed projects can focus on process and outcome measures. Over time, the same project could be presented 2 or 3 times as it evolves to completion. Abstracts are limited to 500 words and abstract criteria are provided with the call for abstracts. Abstracts are submitted through a secure web application the organization uses to build and manage online surveys.

Following the abstract deadline, there is a blinded review of abstracts by the steering committee. This process begins with blinding of the abstracts by the NES. Steering committee members are not assigned abstracts to review if they are from the same work areas as the reviewer (e.g., the oncology nurse administrator does not review abstracts from oncology areas). Each steering committee member is assigned 2 to 4 abstracts to review. Abstract reviewers submit reviews through the same secure web application used for the abstracts. Abstracts are scored numerically and with written comments. Once all abstracts are reviewed, the NES collates the responses, ranking the abstracts numerically. All submissions to date have been accepted for a poster presentation. The top rated 40% to 60% also do a podium presentation. All presenters are notified of the decision with detailed instructions on required elements for contact hours and how to create posters/presentations. This includes resources, support, and timelines for successful poster or podium presentations.

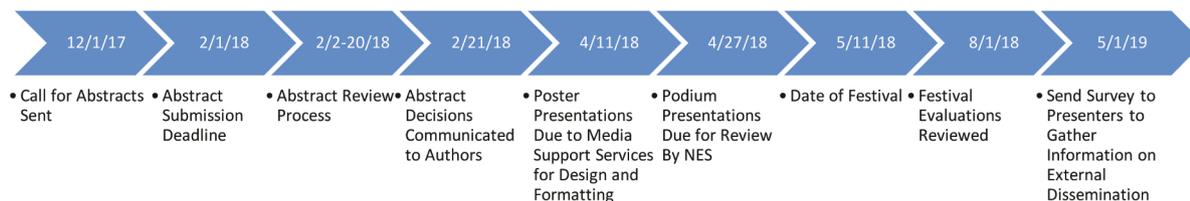
### Support for Presenters

Support to prepare for the festival has evolved over the years and includes drop-in sessions to format poster and podium presentations, individual support, and practice using equipment in the presentation room. Education is also available through the Ideas to Action Education series. Topics in this series that assist presenters include: Writing and Submitting a Successful Abstract, Giving a Podium Presentation, and Creating and Presenting a Poster. The Ideas to Action series dates align with the dates when teams will be working on abstracts or working to create podium and poster presentations. These also remain available after the live offering on the organization's video library for viewing.

### Festival Planning

Once the abstract review process is complete and presenters have been notified, the planning team moves on to planning the festival itself. The agenda is formatted by grouping presentations based on a theme. The themes have varied year to year based on the topics being presented. Most years, the themes are based off the organization's professional practice model or grouped by care area (ambulatory, inpatient, procedural). The festival is advertised via printed posters, e-mail announcements, communication at leadership councils, and through the DON newsletter. In more recent years, physician and allied health colleagues have also been included in the advertising campaign.

**Figure 1.** 2018 Research and Evidence-Based Practice Festival Timeline



A NES leads the contact hour planning. Offering of contact hours for both the podium and poster sessions has been a successful way to encourage attendance. It has been important to award partial credit for the sessions because attendees may not be able to attend the entire festival. Additional planning includes obtaining stands for poster boards and designing the layout of the posters. Every attempt is made to place posters next to each other if they have the same author or authors. Moderators for the podium presentations are identified and provided with training and resources to introduce each session and facilitate questions from the audience. As much as possible, clinical nurses are used for moderators to grow confidence and experience.

Finally, a brochure is formatted for the festival. The brochure is developed in collaboration with the media support department of the organization. It includes a welcome by the chief nursing officer and manager for nursing research, a list of the award winners for top-scoring abstracts, and the abstract for each presentation at the festival. This brochure provides a tangible acknowledgement of the festival and also helps support Magnet Standard New Knowledge, Innovations, and Improvements (NK) 2a for internal dissemination: “Provide one example, with supporting evidence, of how clinical nurses disseminated the organization’s completed nursing research study to internal audiences.”<sup>3(p.64)</sup>

## THE FESTIVAL

The festival occurs over 1 day and includes both posters and podium presentations using the organization’s large auditorium. One section of the auditorium has poster presentations and the other side is reserved for podium presentations. A registration desk is open for the whole day to not only register attendees, but also help direct them to the appropriate room. The day begins with a welcome by the Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) and presentation of the award winners for highest scoring abstract in each category. Following the welcome, the podium presentations begin. Presentations are led by a moderator and done using a discussant format. Presentations are done in groups of 3 to 5 topics followed by a question-and-answer session. The posters are up for the entire day, and presenters are assigned an hour to be at the poster to discuss the poster and answer questions.

The day of the festival would not be possible without additional support. The organization’s media support team provides audiovisual support for the presentations, assisting with sound and timing of presentations. Volunteers from the organization’s volunteer office are also engaged. These volun-

teers greatly aid in the flow of the festival, assisting with a myriad of tasks, including poster set-up, registration, filing of contact hour certificates, and clean-up after the festival.

## REFINEMENT AND GROWTH

No two festivals have been designed the same way; the festival’s success can be attributed to flexibility and adaptation as new issues emerge and reflection on the process occurs. Although the numbers of poster and podium presentations have remained stable through the years, many refinements have been made to continue to make the festival relevant. Attendee, presenter, and leadership feedback have been integral.

The first festival, in 2015, was held in December. Discussion with stakeholders determined that holding the festival during Nurses Week (the second week in May) would be of benefit related to clinical nurse scheduling as well as to celebrate the professional accomplishments of the nursing staff. The festival was moved over time to May.

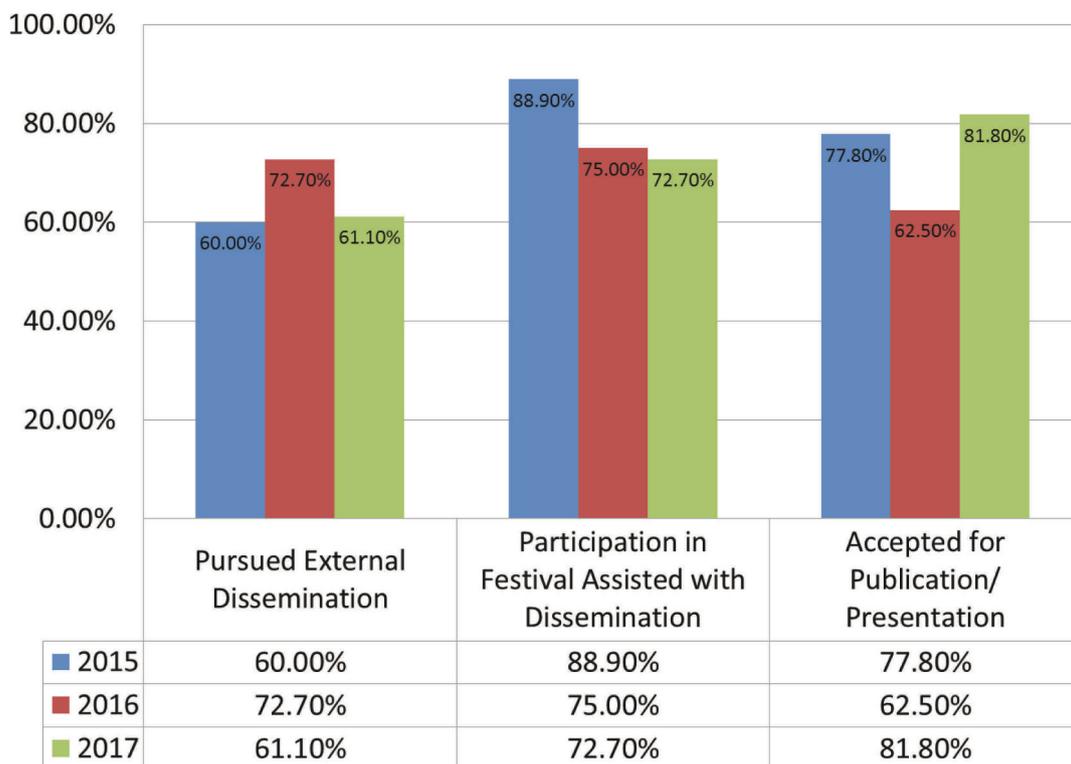
Another enhancement that greatly aided the planning of the festival was moving the abstract submission and review process to an online system. The abstract evaluation for the first festival was cumbersome and subjective; abstracts were submitted via e-mail and reviewed by a panel with no clear review criteria. Implementation of an abstract review tool with scoring made the process more objective and also easier to manage.

Originally, award winners were determined by judging that occurred throughout the day. Although this process acknowledged the final products of the process and engaged clinical nurses in the judging, it was a task that was difficult to manage with all of the other activities occurring during the festival. Therefore, the festival now awards winners based on abstract scores and announces the winners at the beginning of the day.

Growth of the festival has included the incorporation of student projects over time. Doctorate of nursing practice students who complete work at the organization are encouraged to present the results of their projects during the festival.

The initial festival highlighted the work areas that were highly engaged in evidence-based practice. Additionally, there were only a few nurse administrators present during the inaugural festival. The work areas that presented and their nurse administrators were acknowledged in the NEC meeting. The CNO expressed her support for the nurse leader’s work in creating an environment that supported evidence-based practice that empowered clinical nurses to

**Figure 2.** Research and Evidence-Based Practice Festival Outcomes



improve their work environment and patient outcomes through the projects that had been disseminated. The CNO articulated the need for nurse administrators to create these environments. In the following years, the nurse executive committee has set an expectation with their managers to support and engage clinical nurses in this type of work and to encourage them to present their projects at the festival. Initially, 1 work area was not represented in the first festival, but through nurse leadership support the next year that team had 4 presentations. Each nurse administrator attends the festival to show support of the nurses in their work areas who are presenting. This event has become a strategic way to internally disseminate, and attendance is highly encouraged; whereas conflicting events such as meetings and classes are discouraged.

## OUTCOMES

The festival's outcomes are aligned with the goals of the festival. One year after each festival, primary authors are surveyed about external dissemination of projects presented at the festival. The survey achieves about a 50% response rate. To date, the first 3 years of the festival have been measured. Over 60% of primary authors report pursuing external dissemination each year, and the majority of externally submitted abstracts are accepted for publication, poster, or podium presentation. Furthermore, most report that participation in the festival assisted with external dissemination. Because the festival accepts projects at any stage (from conception to completion), not all projects from 2017 are complete or are

just nearing completion. It is anticipated that the number of 2017 projects that pursue external dissemination will grow. See Figure 2 for details. There was a 15% increase in peer-reviewed publications in 2017. Additionally, although not all can be attributed to the festival, the DON has had 42 peer-reviewed publications and 90 national or international presentations since 2015.

Clinical nurses serve as the primary author on the majority of abstracts submitted, and the number of abstracts submitted by clinical nurses has steadily increased over time. Although clinical nurses were the primary author on 55% of abstracts in 2015, this number increased to 68% in 2018. Over 40% of DON work areas are currently conducting a research, EBP, or quality improvement project. Those attending the festival report they are inspired by peers to use clinical inquiry as a method to solve clinical problems and conduct work that advances nursing knowledge and work. These positive trends over time may be attributed to growing competence in evidence-based practice and confidence to present projects.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### Leadership Lessons

Engaging nurse leaders in the festival has been pivotal to its success. After the first festival, it was identified that there needed to be increased communication to nursing leadership. For example, the initial festival demonstrated that a few work areas were more represented than others. These data were

shared with the NEC. The following year, each nurse administrator's areas were well represented, with 1 area increasing from no submissions to 7. Annual updates are now presented at NEC. Additionally, it has been beneficial to add personal invitations to key leadership outside of the DON for interdisciplinary projects that were being presented. The addition of the abstract booklet has allowed us to increase internal dissemination by sending them to key leaders with their work areas highlighted.

### Professional Development Lessons

The overall theme of support, both for those presenting and those attending the festival, has been important. Unlike many professional development opportunities that the NES develops, considerable mentoring is needed for nurses who are presenting, regardless of role in the organization. Although many professional development activities are created, implemented, and evaluated by the NES in collaboration with other NESs and the leadership team, the festival requires mentoring for the majority of presenters. This mentoring involves developing the skill set of others who have varied past experience and perceptions about the dissemination process. A toolkit of resources, which includes 1:1 or small team support, online videos, and written resources, has been crucial to building the confidence of nursing staff to present. The NES acts as a learning facilitator throughout the mentorship process.<sup>4</sup>

Nursing staff attending the festival have reported appreciation for being able to receive contact hours for attending the festival. Further, because staff may not be able to attend the whole day or only portions of the festival, the contact hours are set up so that staff can earn partial credit for attendance at select segments of the festival. Although this requires considerable work and planning on the part of the NES, it is worth the effort to grow the professional practice of not only those participating, but also those attending the festival.

### VALUE ADDED

The value added with this innovation is not one of return on investment in the traditional financial sense. Internal resources can be utilized to minimize costs, and the festival can be adapted in ways such as adjusting the length of the festival based on budget. However, the most important way this festival adds value is through fostering of the professional practice of nurses at all levels of the organization. The festival provides a structure and process to advance evidence-based practice in the clinical setting.

Our data show that the festival assisted participants with successful dissemination of their work via acceptance of poster and podium presentations and published manuscripts. The festival not only supports dissemination of nursing work to external audiences, it is also crucial as a means to internally share the impact of nursing work within the organization. This internal sharing has allowed for the department of nursing as a whole to see and understand the work that is going on across the care continuum. The festival provides an opportunity to spread innovations across the organization and decrease duplication of efforts. Work is shared with the

department of nursing as a whole, allowing groups to engage across silos, building on the work of others to implement best practices across the organization.

The festival has served to motivate nurse leaders to engage staff in evidence-based practice. For example, when one nurse manager noted the first year of the festival that her teams were not represented in the festival, it motivated her to go back to her work area and initiate work that explored the safest and best practices for the patients served. By the next year's festival, that work area had 5 projects in various stages of development at the festival.

The value added beyond the department of nursing is the integration of the organization's strategic plan into the festival. By aligning the focus of the festival with the organization's strategic plan, nurse leaders and their teams can focus on initiatives that add value to the overall organization and advance the mission of both the department of nursing and the overall organization. This focus on the strategic plan helps ensure that the work that is done is truly valuable and supports the organization in a way that is immediately impactful.

One of the results of the festival was an increased awareness of EBP and dissemination of EBP strategies within the organization. Increasing EBP can improve patient care and increase safety and reliability of an organization.<sup>5</sup> There were efforts presented at the festival around key nursing sensitive indicators including catheter-associated urinary tract infections, central line-associated blood stream infections, falls, falls with injury, and health care-acquired pressure ulcers. All of these projects led to attaining the 2014 and 2015 National Database of Nursing Quality Indicators Award for Outstanding Nursing Quality (Academic Medical Centers).

### FUTURE PLANS

Continued evolution of the festival includes extending an invitation to partners in the organization's care network to participate in the festival. It is anticipated that the abstract process may become more competitive because room size limits the number of posters that can be displayed. Creative solutions will be needed in order to continue growth while staying true to the intent of supporting and increasing confidence to present.

### CONCLUSION

An annual research and evidence-based practice festival has assisted this organization's DON in a variety of ways. Increased knowledge of current projects has helped with coordination of effort, nurses at all levels of the organization have been given an avenue to grow presentation skills and increase skill in dissemination of work, and there has been growth in the number of projects that are shared external to the organization. Success of the festival has been dependent on careful planning and collaboration to grow the professional practice of nursing staff. **NL**

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*Kara Mangold, DNP, RN-BC, CCTN, CNE, is nursing education specialist and assistant professor of nursing, at Mayo Clinic College of Medicine in Phoenix, Arizona. She can be reached at [mangold.kara@mayo.edu](mailto:mangold.kara@mayo.edu). Noël Arring, DNP, PhD, RN, OCN, is Nurse Administrator at Mayo Clinic in Phoenix, Arizona. She can be reached at [arring.noel@mayo.edu](mailto:arring.noel@mayo.edu).*

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