Nursing Research

What is it? Why should we be doing it? How do we get involved? The attached document has been prepared with some simple first steps to get into research. Do have a read. If you want to know more or would like some support in developing your ideas contact members of the Research Committee or come along to our sandpit events to talk about your ideas.

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# 1. Getting started in research

## What is nursing research?

Nursing research is systematic inquiry designed to develop knowledge about issues of importance to the nursing profession, including nursing practice, education, administration, and informatics (Polit and Beck 2004).

With the current emphasis on evidence based practice, it has become every nurse’s responsibility to engage in research in some way. At a minimum nurses are expected to be consumers of nursing research and to read research reports to develop new skills and to keep up to date on relevant findings that may affect their practice. At the other end of the scale are the producers of nursing research: nurses who actively participate in designing and implementing research studies. At one time, most nurse researchers were academics who taught in schools of nursing, but research is increasingly being conducted by practising nurses who want to find what works best for their patients. Between these two end points on the continuum lie a rich variety of research activities in which nurses engage as a way of improving their effectiveness and enhancing their professional lives. These activities include the following:

• Participating in a journal club in a practice setting, which involves regular meetings among nurses to discuss and critique research articles

• Attending research presentations at professional conferences

• Discussing the implications and relevance of research findings with clients

• Giving clients information and advice about participation in studies

• Assisting in the collection of research information (e.g., distributing questionnaires to patients)

• Reviewing a proposed research plan with respect to its feasibility in a clinical setting and offering clinical expertise to improve the plan

• Collaborating in the development of an idea for a clinical research project

• Participating on an institutional committee that reviews the ethical aspects of proposed research before it is undertaken

• Evaluating completed research for its possible use in practice, and using it when appropriate

In all these activities, nurses with some research skills are in a better position than those without them to contribute to nursing knowledge. An understanding of nursing research can improve the depth and breadth of every nurse’s professional practice.

In the UK we also have many nurses working in clinical trials as research nurses (hyperlink <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/our-research-community/clinical-research-staff/clinical-research-nurses/> ). Their role is crucial to the smooth running of trials, both to recruit adequate numbers and to help support study participants. These nurses tend not to be involved in study design or in nursing research, but their knowledge puts them in a good position to help develop or support nursing research.

**Read more:**

1. *Yes, nurses do research, and it’s improving patient care*

*Blog by Nancy Blake (2016)*

*https://www.elsevier.com/connect/yes-nurses-do-research-and-it-is-improving-patient-care*

1. *Polit and Beck (2004) Nursing Research: Principles and Methods Lippincott Williams & Wilkins. Freely available on line:*

<https://web2.aabu.edu.jo/tool/course_file/lec_notes/1001391_Nursing%20research-Principles%20and%20methods%20(7e_2003).pdf>

1. The NIHR portal for their dissemination centre. All the latest in health research summarised here: <https://discover.dc.nihr.ac.uk/portal/home> Set yourself up to receive latest news in your area

## How can nurses get involved in research?

The best way to start to get involved in research is to find your team. Who else is involved or interested in research in your area of interest? This could be academic or clinical. The easiest way in the first instance is to sign up for some study that includes research. This could be a Masters, PhD or even a stand-alone research module. Doing a research module will give you a better understanding of research but won’t necessarily equip you to be a Principal Investigator. A PhD should be regarded as a research training for those people who want to lead and undertake primary research. If you just want to be part of a team that is doing research then look around to see who else is doing research where you could be part of the team.

## Where to find support?

Within your NHS Trust there will be a research and development department with staff who will help you to develop your research ideas. In England the NIHR support a national Research Design Service (hyperlink) and there are 10 regional offices. People at the RDS will help support the development of your study from initial concept to obtaining funding. The help and advice you can get will include research methods (both qualitative and quantitative) statistical and health economic advice and specific advice about how to get funding.

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/how-we-are-managed/our-structure/research/research-design-service/how-we-can-help/>

Getting support from academic partners is often a good idea. If your Trust or Health Board have a partnership with a local university then find out who is doing research in the area you are interested and contact them. They may well be interested in helping you to develop a bid for research funding and will remain an active partner to support the study processes once funding is in place.

## Clinical Research Nurses

If you are a clinical research nurse there is lots of support for you in your role. The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) has a dedicated web site that celebrates your work. <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/our-faculty/clinical-research-staff/clinical-research-nurses/>

They host a national annual meeting and have a regular newsletter. There is also a Clinical Research Nursing Strategy <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/our-faculty/clinical-research-staff/clinical-research-nurses/Clinical%20Research%20Nurse%20Strategy%202017_2020FINAL.pdf> which you might find of value.

# 2. Learning about clinical research

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) has a wealth of on-line learning resources that you can access for free if you are an employee of the NHS or a UK university. <https://learn.nihr.ac.uk/course/index.php>

These include GCP training (hyperlink <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/our-research-community/clinical-research-staff/learning-and-development/national-directory/good-clinical-practice/> ), which is compulsory if you want to undertake primary research on NHS patients.

### On line courses:

FREE online course “Improving Healthcare Through Clinical Research”. This is a great course that covers all aspects of clinical research including clinical trials, the scientific process, minimising bias, placebo controls, ethics, informed consent, funding etc.

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/clinical-research%20>

### Good Clinical Practice (GCP)

Good Clinical Practice (GCP) is the international ethical, scientific and practical standard to which all clinical research is GCP training conducted. Compliance with GCP provides public assurance that the rights, safety and wellbeing of research participants are protected and that research data are reliable.

# 3. Funding advice

### Seed funding:

Funding sources are likely to vary depending on where you work. Some institutions provide small amounts of funding to start research projects off or to enable research active staff to do some feasibility or development work before undertaking a full project. If you win a small amount of money don’t try to do too much with it. Think very carefully about how much you can really achieve with this piece. It is always easier to get larger amounts of funding if you have done some developmental work or feasibility testing, so keep each step small.

### PhD funding :

Some research charities, such as Breast Cancer Now <http://breastcancernow.org/breast-cancer-research/funding-for-researchers/apply-for-funding/phd-studentships> will provide funding for PhDs, but they are often at stipend level, rather than full salary. The application also usually comes from the supervisor. If you have a good idea and want to go for one of these find a supervisor to work with so they can put in the application.

### Project grants:

These are awarded by some the national health research institutes, such as NIHR for England, (hyperlink) Health and Care Research Wales (hyperlink) and Chief Scientist Office, NHS Scotland (hyperlink). They may have different streams of research focused on patient benefit or on evaluation of new technologies. Some charities, such as Breast Cancer Now, also award project grants. To get one of these you need to be part of a collaborative research team. If you want to lead one you will usually be doctorally prepared.

# 4. Presentation advice

## Document preparation

If you are lucky enough to have gained funding you will need to turn your research proposal into a protocol. Guidance and templates for protocol development can be found on the NHS Health Research Authority website (<https://www.hra.nhs.uk/planning-and-improving-research/research-planning/protocol/>). You will also need to develop a number of documents to go with your protocol before you can submit it for ethical approval. All research projects involving NHS patients will have to be approved through the NHS Integrated Research Application System (IRAS) <https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/> . This is also a good source of support and information for what you will need to prepare. For example, you will need to prepare participant information and consent documents. There is a great piece of guidance on how to do this on the MRC web pages, produced by the Health Research Authority ( <http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/consent/index.html> )

This covers:

* The principles of consent (both ethical and legal)
* How the principles relate to preparation and use of a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) and consent form
* Recommended content of a PIS and consent form
* Design and style of an effective PIS and consent form

This website also has some templates that you can use.

## How to write an abstract

The function of an abstract is to provide a brief, descriptive summary of the article or presentation you are preparing to give. It needs to inform the reader of the contents of the article so that the reader can see in advance the key areas covered and the main points of the argument.

An abstract clearly states the purpose and direction, the main arguments and the conclusions reached. It is a mini version of the paper. If writing an investigative report which includes research findings, then it is usual to include in the abstract the aims or objectives, methods, findings or results, conclusions and implications.

An abstract does not include details or give examples, it is concerned with only the ‘big ideas’ of the essay/report.

Most conferences or journals will have specific instructions for how to present an abstract. Be sure to check these before writing.

## How to prepare a poster presentation

Vanderbilt University have developed a set of resources on preparing a poster presentation, which are comprehensive.

<https://ww2.mc.vanderbilt.edu/evidencebasedpractice/50288>

Don’t forget when preparing a poster that it is likely that your host institution will have brand guidance for the way that posters should be produced. At the very least you will need to include logos from all the institutions associated with the work. And don’t forget to include any authors who have contributed to the work, including your supervisors if it is part of your academic study.

## How to write a paper for publication

Wiley have written a great guide specifically for nurses thinking about how to get published.

<http://www.wiley-docs.com/HSJ-14-63694_Writing_for_Publication_lowres.pdf>

As well as giving specific information on publishing articles on empirical research, clinical articles and evidence synthesis, this gives guidance on issues such as how to start! It also covers impact factors and copyright issues. It is a helpful, straightforward guide.