White Paper on Holistic Nursing Research

Introduction

The mission of the American Holistic Nursing Association (AHNA) is to advance holistic nursing through community building, advocacy, research and education. The AHNA 2015 research initiatives reflect the organization’s belief that ongoing discovery of knowledge, dissemination of research findings, and evidence-based practice are the foundation of specialized practice in holistic nursing. This White Paper will address AHNA’s position on Holistic Nursing Research (HNR) and the goals and strategies related to holistic nursing research.

Background

Holistic nursing is growing rapidly due to the changing health care climate and the appreciation for the benefits of integrating conventional traditional health care with person-centered approaches that are focused on health and healing and integrate complementary and alternative modalities. With the increased interest in integrative care, holistic nursing is now more visible and important to both patients and practitioners alike. Consequently, there is a growing need for research evidence that substantiates the positive health-related outcomes resulting from the delivery of holistic nursing care. The need for research is imperative for holistic care to thrive and fully develop in health care delivery systems.

Holistic Nursing Research

The American Holistic Nurses Association embraces and supports all research that has holism as a foundation. HNR is grounded in studies that reflect humans are whole and complete and must be studied as such. Holistic research focuses on creating evidence about the mind, body, spirit connection and unity in health as well as the ability of humans to intentionally practice self-healing and participate in healing others and society. To create a strong body of evidence for holistic nursing, research in this area encompasses all modes of inquiry: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods, as well as such unique approaches such as aesthetic inquiry and transpersonal approaches to posing research questions and data analysis. Holistic care with a research foundation promotes fully developed, evidence-based care delivery systems.

The Research Committee’s goals are to foster the growth of knowledge and expertise in the individual holistic nurse and in the organization and prepare holistic nurses to utilize and conduct holistic nursing research.

Holistic Nursing Research: Philosophical and Theoretical Underpinnings

Holistic nursing research is based on a philosophy of holism, or belief in the union of mind-body-spirit-environment-energy. The focus of HNR is understanding holistic phenomena, determining the effectiveness of holistic interventions, and developing an evidence base for holistic nursing practice. Hagedorn and Zahourek’s (2007) model of HNR described it as transparadigmatic, or relevant regardless of the researcher’s paradigm, and embodying all ways
of knowing. Mariano added that holistic nursing (research) scholarship embraces the attributes of openness, keeping wide awake, reflexivity, caring and humor.

AHNA Strategic Plan for Research 2015-2018

Increase Holistic and Integrative Research:

a. Recruit experienced researchers to the Research Committee who are committed to AHNA’s research agenda
b. Promote holistic models for reviewing research, evidence-based practice, and performance improvement
c. Support membership in advancing holistic research
d. Collaborate on research grants
e. Convene a Task Force to develop a PCORI grant

Holistic Nursing Research Goals

It is critical that holistic nursing continue to advance the scientific knowledge base of evidence for holistic practice. Integrating evidence-based nursing research into practice was one of the important responses by nursing and healthcare organizations to the Institute of Medicine report *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health.* Healthcare professionals need such quality information to provide evidence-based, comprehensive care that promotes a focus on healing and recognizes the importance of compassion and caring. The varied settings in which holistic nurses practice offer many opportunities to conduct meaningful research to improve patient outcomes.

Every holistic nurse has a responsibility to engage in what has been described as the consumer–producer continuum in nursing research. At one end of the continuum are nurse consumers of nursing research who review and critique research for evidence-based practice. At the other end are producers of nursing research who actively engage in generating evidence to promote evidence-based teaching and practice outcomes. Along this continuum lies a rich variety of activities in which holistic nurses may engage. A few examples include the following:

- Forming or participating in a journal club to review holistic-based research
- Using holistic research findings to make clinical decisions
- Promoting nursing curriculum rooted in evidence-based practices
- Collaborating on ideas for developing a holistic nursing research study
- Becoming a member of a multidisciplinary team
- Discussing the implications and relevance of HNR and Complementary and Integrative health approaches (CIHA) findings with patients

Strategies to Increase Holistic and Integrative Research

- Supporting holistic nursing research projects through yearly research grants and activities such as mentoring, providing venues for dissemination (regional and national), include instructional webinars
- Providing exemplars of HNR as a teaching tool for novice researchers and utilizing holistic nursing research results to make practice decisions
- Utilizing holistic nursing research results to make practice decisions
• Developing a dynamic list of current holistic nursing research outcomes by type as a resource for members and the public
• Developing a resource for holistic nursing researchers to network with others with similar research interests and to promote interprofessional collaboration
• Fostering knowledge of holistic nursing research and its implications for education and practice for AHNA members through communications, such as Research e-News, presentations at conferences, webinars, and other formats

Summary

Holistic nursing research is based on a philosophy of holism and uses current and emerging methods of inquiry. There is a growing need for HNR to build an evidence base and holistic nursing models to support holistic nursing practice as well as to develop new ways of researching phenomena of interest to holistic nurses. Thus, the goal of the Research Committee is to foster the growth and expertise of AHNA members and to encourage and mentor holistic nursing researchers.

References


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