

# Using Mobile Technologies to Access Evidence-Based Resources: A Rural Health Clinic Experience



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## KEYWORDS

- Mobile technologies • iPads • Apps • Access to information
- Evidence-based nursing practice • Rural nurses • Nurses' perceptions

## KEY POINTS

- Most rural nurses are in favor of using mobile devices to access evidence-based nursing (EBN) resources at the point of care despite the fact that they have limited use of electronic evidence-based information programs (EEIBP).
- Rural nurses had different interpretations of information literacy and evidence-based practice (EBP).
- Lack of time, experience, and training are the major barriers for rural nurses to learn how to use mobile devices to access EBN resources.
- Participants' information needs center on medication and diagnosis. When they have questions, they tend to turn to help from other nurses, electronic or print resources, or a combination of these.
- Past experience with mobile devices influences how enthusiastically nurses embrace EEIBP.

## INTRODUCTION

EBP has become an expectation for nurses and health care providers to provide quality patient care. Nurses must access a great deal of information via electronic resources to stay well informed and up to date, yet little is known about how nurses in rural settings access and use evidence in their daily practice.<sup>1</sup> Although nurses must use evidence-based resources to provide evidence-based care, limited access

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to evidence-based information is a barrier to research utilization in the clinical setting, especially in remote locations. This qualitative descriptive study determines the feasibility and usability of a mobile device to support clinical decision making in a rural health clinic via increasing access to and use of evidence-based information.

Mobile devices used in clinical settings include tablet computers, handheld computers, smartphones, and personal digital assistants (PDAs). Many reliable and credible evidence-based electronic repositories are available for download to mobile devices, providing quick access to valuable nursing information. Nurses who are proficient using mobile devices outfitted with these resources can gain access rapidly and as a result may bestow more suitable and efficient care to their clients.

### STUDY AIM

The specific aim of this study was to describe the feasibility and usability of a mobile device and selected EEIBP used to support clinical decision making in a rural health clinic. This study focused on the nurses' descriptions of their experience with the selected mobile device and EEIBP.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature searches were conducted in the following databases: PubMed/Medline, CINAHL Plus with Full Text, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Search concepts included access to information, in-service training, EBN practice, mobile technologies, and rural or remote clinics or hospitals. The searches were limited to English language and the publication years from 2003 through October 2014.

Mobile technologies have opened new doors for nurses to access an array of online evidence-based resources, offered a solution for getting evidence to nurses directly at the point of care,<sup>2</sup> and connected learning and evidence to clinical care.<sup>3</sup> The study published by Doran and colleagues<sup>4</sup> in 2012 implies handheld portable devices support nurses' use of information resources in clinical practice.

Nurses who use PDAs believe that these devices support clinical decision making, promote patient safety, and increase productivity.<sup>5</sup> Using mobile devices can also promote timely communication, enabling evidence-based collaborative practice and supporting workplace learning.<sup>6</sup> Nurses who access resources using mobile devices are more efficient in determining an answer to the clinical questions.<sup>7</sup>

However, most nurses do not have adequate information technology and information literacy competencies<sup>8,9</sup> to access and use needed evidence-based information. In addition, nurses receive less education pertaining to information technology and information literacy than do most health care workers.<sup>10</sup> Gosling and colleagues<sup>8</sup> investigated the factors influencing nurses' use of the Web-based Clinical Information Access Program that provided online access to evidence-based resources at the point of care. They discovered that the most frequent reasons for not using the resources are lack of training and time; this is especially true for nurses who work at rural or remote health care facilities. A 2012 survey by the Healthcare Information Management System Society reveals that mobile technologies improved access to patient information and clinical information from remote locations<sup>11</sup> where access to information is often more limited and challenging.<sup>12</sup>

However, there is a lack of published literature concerning education received by nurses working in rural settings pertaining to the use of tablet computers for accessing evidence-based resources. Moreover, little guidance exists for teaching nurses how to use mobile devices and applications within the clinical setting.

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