



Journal clubs: A two-site case study of nurses' continuing professional development☆☆☆

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SUMMARY

Objective: The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of intensive care unit nurses in two nursing journal clubs.

Background: Few nurses feel comfortable using evidence to guide their practice. Communities of nurses are beginning to be understood as essential for the production and transfer of knowledge. Journal clubs are a meeting among colleagues to discuss professional literature. However, there is little nursing journal club research. **Settings and Participants:** Over six months, 70 healthcare professionals (including 64 nurses) participated in monthly journal club meetings in two ICUs of one Ontario hospital.

Methods: A qualitative two-site case study methodology with six data collection methods was employed including individual interviews, focus groups, surveys, document analysis, and field notes.

Findings: Journal clubs provided nurses with incentive and confidence to read research articles, created a community of practice, provided a structure to reflect-on-practice, and led to reported changes in clinical practice. However, any gains in competence of nurses with research critical appraisal skills were probably modest.

Conclusion: Journal clubs can foster modest knowledge translation and evidence-based practice at a grass roots level. However, journal clubs may have a greater impact when implemented alongside other knowledge translation strategies such as working with graduate prepared nurses.

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Introduction

Evidence-based practice (EBP) is an important part of nursing care (Brown et al., 2009; Coopey et al., 2006; Koehn and Lehman, 2008; Krom et al., 2010). However few nurses feel comfortable finding research articles, appraising evidence, or using research to guide their practice (Davies, 2002; Krugman, 2003; Pravikoff et al., 2005; Thompson et al., 2001). Most importantly, there is a lack of investment in EBP among many practicing nurses (Krom et al., 2010; Thompson et al., 2001).

For the purpose of this study, two journal clubs were created and run in two different campuses within the same hospital. Over a six month period, 70 healthcare professionals, including 64 nurses, attended 12 monthly journal club meetings across the two sites. In order to explore nurses' experiences within these journal clubs, a qualitative two-site case study was undertaken with six data collection methods.

Background

Knowledge Translation and Evidence-Based Practice

Evidence-based practice (EBP) is the process of using the best available evidence in patient care (Goode and Piedalue, 1999). Knowledge translation (KT) – the study of how to “get research from the bench to the bedside” – is essential for EBP to occur (Estabrooks, 2003, p. 53). Currently, the time it takes for research results to be implemented into clinical practice is too long (Graham et al., 2006). KT in the health professions was born out of the need to reduce this gap (Bellman et al., 2010). At present, there is little evidence showing what KT strategies work and in which context (Mitton et al., 2007). In the nursing profession, communities of nurses are beginning to be understood as essential for both the production and transfer of knowledge (Estabrooks, 2003). Knowledge flows readily within communities of nurses, and therefore, learning how to access these communities is essential in enhancing research use among nurses (Estabrooks, 2003).

A community is a group of people who are brought together by, and share an understanding in common activities (Lave and Wenger, 1991). However, the members of a community may have varying interests, varying points of view and make varied contributions (Lave and Wenger, 1991). According to Lave and Wenger, communities are the place where the majority of learning occurs, both formal and informal. A community of practice is “a group of people who share a concern,

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a set of problems, or a passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and expertise...by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 4). According to this definition, there are three major components of a community of practice: (1) a common objective, concern, or interest, (2) deepening of knowledge, and (3) ongoing regular interactions.

Journal Clubs

A journal club is a meeting among colleagues designed to discuss articles that appear in professional journals that are relevant to clinical practice (Rich, 2006). Findings from nursing journal club literature suggest that they can improve nurses' confidence in interpreting and appraising research articles and foster a positive attitude towards research (Goodfellow, 2004); establish a regular habit of reading and raise awareness of relevant literature (Sheehan, 1994); increase knowledge (Kartes and Kamel, 2003); and lead to practice changes (St. Pierre, 2005; Kartes and Kamel, 2003; Kirchhoff and Beck, 1995). Lehna et al. (2010) analyzed the discussion postings in a virtual journal club and found that the contributions of nurses reflected knowledge, experience and critical thinking. However, in terms of a critical appraisal of the literature, the available evidence to support most of the reported benefits of journal clubs is sparse. Although there is literature about nursing journal clubs, there is very little research. There is a need to research nursing journal clubs with rigorous and transparent methodologies in order to understand the potential role of journal clubs in nursing professional development and enhancing knowledge translation for EBP.

Theoretical Framework

The journal clubs created for this study were designed with empirical evidence in the adult education field using Ginsberg and Wlodkowski's (2009) motivational framework for culturally responsive teaching. This framework was appropriate because motivation is a pre-requisite for self-directed learning (Deci and Ryan, 2000). The four motivational elements from Ginsberg and Wlodkowski's framework are: establishing inclusion, enhancing meaning, engendering competence, and developing attitude. Within the journal clubs, establishing inclusion was sought by drawing on the clinical expertise of nurses during discussions and by opening up the journal clubs to all healthcare professionals from either study site. Enhancing meaning was targeted by helping nurses to understand how research applies to their clinical practice. Developing a positive attitude towards journal articles and research was targeted by selecting salient and engaging research articles, and engendering competence was targeted by helping nurses feel more competent with reading and evaluating research articles.

The Study

Objective

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of nurses in two ICU nursing journal clubs. Three research questions guided this study,

- 1) How do journal clubs affect the self-directed learning of intensive care unit nurses?
- 2) What kind of community is created within journal clubs?
- 3) How do journal clubs affect nurses' clinical practice?

Design and Data Collection

A qualitative two-site case study (Stake, 2006) with six data collection methods was conducted. Case study design was chosen for this study because of the strength of case study research in exploring context

dependent experience (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Data were collected from November 2010 to May 2011 including:

1. 6 semi-structured interviews with nurses;
2. 2 focus groups with nurses;
3. Researcher field notes;
4. Anonymous surveys;
5. Document review of staff-meeting and unit council minutes;
6. Interviews with other healthcare professionals.

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups with participating nurses were conducted to explore the nursing experience of participating in journal clubs (Table 1). Interview and focus group questions were derived from the theoretical framework. Field notes and anonymous surveys were used to record the demographics and the researcher's observations of each journal club. Document review of staff meeting minutes was included in the data collection to further explore the impact of journal clubs on nursing clinical practice and to validate findings from other sources of data through triangulation. Interviews with other healthcare professionals (6 physicians, 6 pharmacists, and 3 nurse educators) working in the two study sites were included in the data collection to further explore the "establishing inclusion" element from the theoretical framework. All interviews and focus groups were facilitated by the researcher and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Settings and Participants

For the purpose of this study, 12 monthly journal club meetings were held between November 2010 and April 2011 from 7:30 pm to 9 pm in two campuses of one large academic Ontario hospital. Dinner was provided. Journal club topics such as "obesity in the ICU", "central line infections", and "sedation" were chosen in consultation with participating nurses. One or two journal articles were chosen and made available prior to the journal club meetings. Some meetings started with brief introductory level information sessions intended to help nurses in selecting and appraising journal articles. Each meeting started with a brief overview of the article(s) and was followed by a guided discussion.

There was no commitment required to attend journal clubs. Therefore, journal club participants were a floating pool of healthcare professionals rather than one consistent group who met regularly (Table 2). Although other healthcare professionals were welcome to attend, journal clubs were designed and run for nursing professional development. Furthermore, the principal investigator in this study is employed as a staff nurse in one of the study sites (Site One) and acted as both facilitator and researcher of the journal clubs in both research sites.

Table 1
Nurse interview participants.

Site One	Site Two
Individual interviews: nurses 1–3 (n = 3)	Individual interviews: nurses 1–3 (n = 3)
2 females 1 male Diploma–MScN 13–28 years' experience Attended 3–4 journal clubs	3 females Diploma–MScN 2–33 years' experience Attended 2–4 journal clubs
Focus group: nurses 4–11 (n = 8)	Focus group: nurses 4–6 (n = 3)
6 females 2 males Diploma–baccalaureate 2–25 years' experience 2 attended 1 journal club 4 attended 2 journal clubs 2 attended 3 journal clubs	All female Diploma–MScN student 5–20 years' experience 1 attended 2 journal clubs 2 attended 1 journal club

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