

Tools for evidence-based vascular nursing practice: Achieving information literacy for lifelong learning

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Information literacy is essential in facilitating evidence-based practice (EBP) activities. In vascular nursing, the implementation of EBP is of utmost importance. Best practice grounded in research evidence can contribute to improved patient care outcomes for individuals with vascular disease. The following paper discusses information literacy competencies for nurses to develop in the context of EBP, with an emphasis on formulating a clinical question and searching for evidence. Relevant health science information resources are described, including their value and purpose in the 6S model of evidence. Also discussed are practical and supportive solutions with proven effectiveness in ensuring nurses' success with EBP. (J Vasc Nurs 2017; ■:1-10)

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE SUCCESS BEGINS WITH INFORMATION LITERACY

EBP and vascular nursing

Successful implementation of evidence-based practice (EBP) can improve patient care outcomes for an aging population that is living longer, including those with vascular disease. The literature reveals several positive outcomes resulting from the application of evidence to vascular nursing-related practice including prevention of venous thromboembolism, postthrombotic syndrome, renal artery occlusion, and heel pressure ulcers.¹⁻⁴ In addition, EBP has a positive impact on the culture of health care delivery by promoting a spirit of inquiry. It fosters a healthy questioning of established patient care practices in seeking to deliver the highest quality of care based on the best available evidence, clinical expertise, and patient preferences.^{5,6} For nurses to fully engage in EBP, their knowledge and skills need to continually develop as part of essential lifelong learning. One of these major competencies is information literacy.

Information literacy

Information literacy skills are key facilitators to sustained EBP implementation. As defined by the American Library Association, an information literate individual “must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.”⁷ From this definition, it is obvious how information literacy skills are inextricably linked to EBP. The ability to articulate an information need in the form of a clinical question; search for evidence in a variety of information resources; and critically appraise, evaluate, integrate, and disseminate that evidence, all require a solid set of information literacy skills. These skills are so crucial to all nurses in today’s constantly evolving health care environment that in 2014, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) published their Information Literacy Competency Standards for Nursing (ILCSN).^{8,9} The direct alignment of the ILCSN to the EBP process is shown in [Table 1](#). Information literacy skills have the potential to instill in nurses the self-confidence, motivation, and ability to take clinical questions to the next level, beyond the initial spirit of inquiry, toward full EBP integration and implementation. A variety of information resources and support mechanisms exist to guide nurses along the EBP trajectory. Information literacy skills can be developed, refined, and enhanced by consistent utilization of these tools in everyday practice.

FRAMING THE SEARCH FOR EVIDENCE

Formulating a searchable question with PICO

The ability to concisely articulate an information need is a core information literacy skill, and it forms the basis of EBP—asking a clinical question. The classic PICO framework can be used to formulate a focused, answerable question and generate appropriate search terms for finding the best evidence. PICO consists of four core elements in building a clinical question—P (patient/population/problem),

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TABLE 1

INFORMATION LITERACY COMPETENCY STANDARDS FOR NURSING MAPPED TO EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE STEPS

<i>Information Literacy Competency Standards for Nursing*</i>	<i>Evidence-Based Practice Steps†</i>
Standard one The information literate nurse determines the nature and extent of the information needed.	Step 1: Ask <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulate a focused, answerable clinical question using the PICO(T) framework to articulate the information need
Standard two The information literature nurse accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.	Step 2: Search <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a search strategy to locate the best evidence in appropriate databases and resources Construct search terms from key concepts identified in the PICO(T) question
Standard three The information literate nurse critically evaluates the procured information and its sources, and as a result, decides whether or not to modify the initial query and/or seek additional sources and whether to develop a new research process.	Step 3: Appraise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critically appraise the evidence by evaluating its validity, reliability, and applicability in answering the clinical question
Standard four The information literature nurse, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.	Step 4: Integrate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate the best evidence with clinical expertise and patient preferences and values Step 5: Evaluate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the outcomes of the evidence-based practice change
Standard five The information literate nurse understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.	Step 6: Disseminate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share results of the evidence-based practice change for other clinicians or colleagues to benefit from When publishing or presenting findings, provide citations and references to the evidence

*Association of College and Research Libraries. Information Literacy Competency Standards for Nursing. <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/nursing>.⁸

†Melnyk BM, Fineout-Overholt E. *Evidence-Based Practice in Nursing and Healthcare*. Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer Health; 2015.⁶

I (intervention), C (comparison, if any), and O (outcome). A T for time may also be added in some scenarios (PICOT) when the time frame in meeting patient care outcomes needs to be measured. The PICO framework helps nurses avoid poorly constructed clinical questions which have the detrimental effect of leading to ineffective search outcomes with irrelevant information. It also leads to productivity by facilitating the development of a clinical question in a systematic way.⁶ This is especially important considering that lack of time is one of the most commonly reported barriers to EBP among nurses.¹⁰ Table 2 provides an example of how PICO can be used to generate search terms (including keywords and database subject headings) for a vascular nursing clinical scenario.

RESOURCES IN THE SEARCH FOR EVIDENCE

The 6S model

Once the clinical question is established and the information need thoroughly articulated, the search for evidence can begin. Knowing where and how to search for evidence is a fundamental component to information literacy. Various evidence pyramids and hierarchies exist to guide the search for high-quality, relevant evidence.¹¹ The 6S model (Figure 1) offers a pragmatic approach to searching for information which can eliminate many of the barriers that nurses might encounter in finding high-quality evidence. It has become a widely used model in guiding the search for evidence,¹¹ and its use has been recommended in the nursing literature for various specialties including neonatal, orthopedic,

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