

Book Review

Reading, Understanding, and Applying Nursing Research: A Text and Workbook

James A. Fain

Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1999, 371 pp.

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Reviewed by France Bouthillette

With the increasing awareness of professionals as consumers of research findings, the number of textbooks introducing nurses to research is on the rise. *Reading, Understanding, and Applying Nursing Research* is such a text, with undergraduate nursing students, R.N.s returning to school, and practising nurses as the target readership. The author clearly states that the goal of the book is to help the reader understand and evaluate research reports.

In keeping with his goal, Fain starts each chapter with learning objectives and a glossary of terms, and concludes each with a summary of the ideas presented and some learning activities. These well-devised exercises give the reader an opportunity to gain hands-on experience with each of the research steps. Some of the exercises require the learner to locate several research articles. This may place extra demands on the practising nurse using the book as a self-teaching tool. However, conducting a literature search is an important skill for the researcher to develop.

Part I of the book (chapters 1 and 2) introduces nursing research and the research process. Chapter 1 includes definitions of research and scientific method, as well as a discussion of the importance of research in nursing. The author has made good use of resources from several nursing associations, such as the research role of nurses with different educational backgrounds, prepared by the American Nurses' Association, and the Midwest Nursing Research Society Guidelines for Scientific Integrity. These are important guiding documents that are not always readily available. Fain's discussion of scientific method, however, could be confusing for the novice research consumer, his target audience. For instance, scientific research and nursing research

are presented as different entities, and quantitative research is stated to be scientific inquiry while qualitative research is presented as an approach to knowledge structure.

The second chapter provides an overview of the research process, identifying and briefly describing five general steps: Selecting and Defining the Problem; Selecting a Research Design; Methods; Data Analysis; and Utilizing Research.

The first several chapters of Part II (3–8) deal with each step in greater detail, succinctly and clearly addressing the essential concepts of quantitative research. However, the author's failure to specify that only quantitative research will be covered in these chapters could easily be mistaken by a novice reader as indicating that only quantitative research follows the scientific method. There is no discussion of qualitative research before chapter 9, where qualitative and quantitative designs are described. This chapter (written by a collaborator) presents an interesting view of the two types of research design — as on a continuum, with quantitative emphasis at one end and qualitative at the other. Chapters 10 through 12 cover the different qualitative approaches. Written by research experts in phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography, these contributions summarize well the methods and their underlying principles.

Part III presents the concepts related to interpreting research findings, critiquing research reports, and utilizing research. The discussion on interpreting research findings is limited, but combined with the general critiquing criteria it should offer a starting place for the reader. Also included are examples of a quantitative and a qualitative critique; however, these are brief and provide few links with the concepts presented in earlier chapters. The final chapter of the book consists of a good overview of the many research utilization models and a brief discussion of each stage in the research utilization process.

The workbook component includes review and multiple-choice questions relating to each chapter. The questions focus on content. Several sections also feature critical-thinking questions, calling for an application of knowledge. Since no answers are supplied for the workbook, the volume itself will likely be more useful as a text for a research course than as a self-teaching manual.

Reading, Understanding, and Applying Nursing Research: A Text and Workbook is a valuable addition to the literature in this field. Its author has managed to present complex knowledge in a clear manner, and it includes many good exercises to facilitate the learning process. It will

probably function better as a textbook for an introductory course than as a tool for self-education. Nurses interested in qualitative research might find the book insufficiently comprehensive in this area.

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Erratum

Dans le numéro 3 du volume 30 de la Revue, pages 99–121, voir « Une intervention infirmière familiale systémique appliquée dès la naissance d'un enfant ayant une déficience : les effets sur l'adaptation des parents », nous avons omis d'inclure le nom des instances qui ont financé la recherche de Madame Diane Pelchat, Ph.D., soit le Conseil québécois de recherche sociale (CQRS, 1993–1995) et le Programme national de recherche pour le développement en santé (PNRDS, 1994–1998). Nous présentons toutes nos excuses à les auteures, ainsi qu'à ces organismes, pour cette omission.

In the article in Vol. 30, No. 3, pages 99–121, entitled "A systemic family nursing intervention following the birth of a handicapped child: Effect on parental adaptation," we omitted the name of the organizations that financed the research. These were the Conseil québécois de recherche sociale (CQRS, 1993–95) and the National Health Research and Development Program (NHRDP, 1994–98). We apologize to the authors, Diane Pelchat, Ph.D., et al., and to these organizations for the omission.