Book Review

Reading, Understanding, and Applying Nursing Research: A Text and Workbook
James A. Fain
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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 quali-
tative 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 find-
ings, 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 pre-
sented in earlier chapters. The final chapter of the book consists of a
good overview of the many research utilization models and a brief dis-
cussion 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 work-
book, 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


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.