



## Nursing Intervention Research

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**A** major goal in health care today is to improve outcomes and deliver high-quality patient care. Nursing, as a healthcare profession, must develop and provide clinical nursing practices that demonstrate solid research evidence. Clinical or nursing intervention research is defined as

Studies either questioning existing care practices or testing innovations in care that are shaped by nursing's values and goals, guided by a strong theoretical basis, informed by recent advances in science, and designed to improve the quality of care and health of individuals, families, communities, and society. (Naylor, 2003, p. 382)

This approach involves a unique research process of designing, implementing, evaluating, and disseminating nursing interventions that are appropriate and effective in addressing the presenting patient problem. In this article, each phase of this process will be presented and described, with application to oncology nursing.

### Designing Nursing Interventions

Developing nursing interventions may be challenging. However, this phase of nursing intervention research is critical, and thorough attention and effort should be done in creating an intervention based on a comprehensive understanding of the topic of interest and the theoretical foundation. Nursing interventions can be defined as any treatment, therapy, procedure, or deliberate cognitive, physical, or verbal activity that is based on scientific rationale and performed with or for an individual or family for stated goals that are beneficial for the patient (Bulechek & McCloskey, 1992; Burns & Grove, 2004; Sidani & Braden, 2011). Nursing inter-

ventions can be simple or complex. A simple intervention is characterized by a low level of complexity and includes one component aimed at one specific problem (Sidani & Braden, 2011). A complex intervention is characterized by a high level of complexity and is comprised of multiple components that are aimed at different aspects of the same problem or different inter-related problems. According to a Medical Research Council report, elements of complexity include number of and interactions between components within the experimental and control interventions, number and difficulty of behaviors required by those delivering or receiving the intervention, number of groups or organizational levels targeted by the intervention, number and variability of outcomes, and degree of flexibility or tailoring of the intervention (Craig, Dieppe, Macintyre, Nazareth, & Petticrew, 2008). Other elements that may contribute to the complexity include time involved and number of individuals required to complete the intervention (Polit & Beck, 2012).

Although situational variations may exist, Polit and Beck (2012) have developed a list of ideal features for nursing interventions. An ideal nursing intervention would be salient, efficacious, safe, conceptually sound, cost effective, feasible, developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive, accessible, acceptable, adaptable, and readily disseminated. To achieve an ideal intervention, completion of critical components of the design process are essential and will ensure a well-developed intervention that is amenable to testing and will contribute to nursing practice. These components include defining the patient problem and patient population; selecting a theoretical framework; identifying patient outcomes and defining measures; and developing intervention

content and delivery methods that may include dose, timing, frequency, duration, intensity, and setting (Aranda, 2008; Polit & Beck, 2012).

The initial step in developing a nursing intervention is the selection of the patient problem and population and acquisition of in-depth knowledge (Aranda, 2008; Polit & Beck, 2012). Characteristics of the patient problem and population should be an area of researcher interest and passion and a common practice concern. The targeted population should be fairly specific because this will guide knowledge acquisition and, later, sample recruitment for intervention testing. Gaining an in-depth understanding of the problem may be achieved through a literature search, targeting descriptive research and systematic reviews that not only analyze the specific patient problem, but also examine other similar interventions. In addition, discussions with colleagues and experts in the area of interest may increase the researcher's insight and comprehension of the topic (Aranda, 2008; Polit & Beck, 2012).

Selection of a theoretical, conceptual basis comprises the next step in the development of a nursing intervention. The theoretical framework is critical to defining the construct validity and providing intervention justification. The theoretical framework should be reflected in key elements of the nursing intervention and ultimately will facilitate interpretation of the intervention by the nursing community (Aranda, 2008).

On completion of these activities, attention and detail to desired outcomes will provide structure and direction in

ONF, 42(4), 409–411.  
doi: 10.1188/15.ONF.409-411