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*Source / Izvornik:* **Sestrinski glasnik, 2019, 24, 109 - 112**

**Journal article, Published version**

**Rad u časopisu, Objavljena verzija rada (izdavačev PDF)**

<https://doi.org/10.11608/sgnj.2019.24.021>

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:184:762849>

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*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2024-09-10**

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# Znanstveno istraživački rad u sestrinstvu u Republici Hrvatskoj

## Nursing scientific-research work in Croatia

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### Sažetak

**Uvod:** Zdravstvena istraživanja važna su za poboljšanje zdravlja, kvalitete i zadovoljstva pacijenata. Iako je došlo do značajnog napretka u području zdravstvenih istraživanja, medicinske sestre još uvijek ne provode znanstveno-istraživački rad koliko liječnici. Kako bi se sestrinstvo poboljšalo kao disciplina, važno je da medicinske sestre provode istraživanja koja se temelje na dokazima i koja imaju potencijal za dobrobit pacijenata.

**Cilj:** Cilj provedenog istraživanja bio je procijeniti percepcije medicinskih sestara o znanstveno-istraživačkom radu u sestrinstvu.

**Metode:** Provedeno je poprečno istraživanje. Podaci su prikupljeni online upitnikom. Istraživanje je provedeno među medicinskim sestrama u Hrvatskoj.

**Rezultati:** U istraživanju je sudjelovalo ukupno 130 medicinskih sestara. 86,2% su žene i 13,8% muškarci. 85,6% medicinskih sestara smatra da je znanstveni rad u sestrinstvu važan, 72,1% nikada nije napisalo istraživački rad i 88,5% ima želju za znanstvenim istraživanjima koja bi mogla poboljšati sestrijsku praksu. Većina sudionika (64,3%) smatra da je znanstveno-istraživački rad u sestrinstvu važan za poboljšanje osobnog zadovoljstva.

**Zaključak:** Medicinske sestre su svjesne važnosti znanstveno-istraživačkog rada, ali većina njih ne provodi nikakva istraživanja. Potencijalne prepreke su preopterećenost poslom, vremenski deficit i nedostatak interesa. Važno je motivirati medicinske sestre da obavljaju istraživački rad, jer istraživanja mogu pomoći medicinskim sestrama da odgovore na promjene u zdravstvenom sustavu i poboljšaju njegu pacijenata.

**Ključne riječi:** Motivacija • zdravstvena njega • znanstveni rad • istraživački rad

**Kratki naslov:** sestrinstvo i znanstveno objavljivanje

### Abstract

**Introduction:** Healthcare research is important to improve patients' health, quality and satisfaction with care. Although there is a significant improvement in the field of healthcare research, nurses still do not perform research work as much as doctors. To improve nursing as a discipline it is important for nurses to conduct research that is based on evidence and that has potential to benefit to the patients.

**Aim:** The aim of conducted research was to evaluate perceptions of clinical nurses about scientific-research work in nursing.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional research was performed. Data were collected using online questionnaire. The research was conducted among clinical nurses in Croatia.

**Results:** A total of 130 clinical nurses participated in the research. 86,2% were female and 13,8% male. 85,6% nurses think that scientific work in nursing is important, 72,1% have never written a research paper and 88,5% has a wish for scientific research which could improve nursing practice. Most of the participants (64,3%) think that scientific nursing research is important for improving personal satisfaction.

**Conclusion:** Nurses are aware of the importance of research work, but most of them do not perform any kind of research work. Potential barriers are work overload, time deficit and lack of interest. It is important to motivate nurses to perform the research work, because research can help nurses to respond to changes in the healthcare systems and improve patients care.

**Keywords:** motivation • nursing • scientific work • research work

**Running head:** nursing and scientific publication

Received 9<sup>th</sup> February 2019;

Accepted at 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019;

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### Introduction

Research is a structured application of scientific method to explore an issue of interest in order to understand it better or to gain new truths [1]. The goal of research is to develop, refine and expand the body of nursing knowledge [2]. It is important for the continuous growth and development of relevant knowledge in nursing. It also provides the nurses with knowledge and analytical skills they need for performing the research [3]. Nursing research is a systematic and rigorous process of inquiry that aims to generate and

test concepts and propositions, which constitute middle-range theories that are derived from conceptual models of nursing [4].

Although nurses have made significant improvements in the field of research over the past two decades, there are not enough scientific research works published by the nurses in Croatia [5]. Nurses started their education in hospitals already in 1846. The formal nursing education started when first nursing school was established in 1921

in Zagreb. In further years, other nursing schools were established in Croatia [6]. A big influence on nurses' education had Dr Andrija Štampar which was the principal of the School of Public Health in Zagreb. Till then nurses were considered only as physician assistants and not as professionals with specific knowledge. In the following years, a postgraduate program for nurses was established [7, 8]. In 2003, nurses have established the Chamber of Nurses in Croatia [9]. In the same year the Nursing Act was accepted with which nurses gain clearly defined nursing activities, standards of education, requirements for performing nursing, nurses' duties and quality assessment of the nursing. Moreover, nursing has progressed but still insufficient. Nursing is today a recognized profession that no one denies. As a profession, nursing today requires strict education, and what goes on towards higher grades is more complex and sophisticated [10]. Matulic said that nursing has developed different criteria for evaluating and judging the quality of nursing practice as well conditions for obtaining a work permit [10]. In the Republic of Croatia there are 30 000 nurses of which 7000 have college or university education. Croatian nurses with only secondary vocational qualifications do not meet the requirements for licensing. The current legislation on nursing is not implemented in the health care system [7].

Goals for the EU region in the field of nursing are raising the quality of service delivery, improving education in line with EU guidelines, improving working conditions, increasing the efficiency of management structures, and introducing evidence of practical evidence-based work [11]. In Croatia, we can say that the "new way" Croatian nursing started in the early 1990s by establishing professional associations and nursing organizations within the newly established Croatian state. Systematic work and analysis of the existing situation could be started in defining goals development of the profession itself. Theoretical considerations for Croatian nurses are not present, furthermore there is little written in the textbooks, professional articles and reviews. Nursing is becoming more and more understood as a discipline that has a recognizable program of action and is independent of other disciplines in the system health care. Some see it as an interest, some as a scientific discipline, and they do more moderate, they say it is a profession that will finally get us a legitimate status [12].

## Methods

A cross-sectional research was conducted among clinical nurses in Croatia using online questionnaires. Nurses fulfilled questionnaire in the online form, which was mediated through social media and e-mail. The questionnaire was designed by the authors according to the previous literature review. Participants were informed about the anonymity and the purpose of the research. All Ethical principles for conducting research were taken into account.

## Results

The research was conducted among 130 clinical nurses. A total of 86,2% were female and 13,8% male. 42,6% of them were between 30 and 40, 27,9% were between 40 and 50, and 23,3% were between 18 and 30 years old. Other characteristics of the sample are shown in the table, [Table 1].

Most of the participated nurses (n = 111; 85,4%) think that nursing research work is important. 6,9% (n = 9) do not agree and 7,7% (n = 10) do not know.

64,4 % of them do know nursing research work. Even though only 27,9% (n = 36) did carried out a nursing research work, more than half of nurses (64,3%; n = 83) think that it is important for their personal satisfaction [Table 2].

More than half of participants (57,7%) are interested in performing nursing research work and 42,3% are not interested. They said that it would be motivated if they had more free time, additional knowledge, money, support by the institution or master education to perform nursing research work [Table 3].

TABLE [1] Sample characteristics

Age (years)	n	%
18 – 30	30	23,3
30 – 40	55	42,6
40 – 50	36	27,9
50 – 60	8	6,2
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	112	86,2
Male	18	13,8
<b>Work experience (years)</b>		
0-10	34	26,2
10-20	50	38,5
20-30	37	28,5
30>0	9	6,8
<b>Employment</b>		
Yes	125	96,9
No	4	3,1
<b>Qualification</b>		
High school education	41	31,5
High expertise	54	41,5
Higher expertise	35	26,9

**TABLE [2]** Questions about nursing scientific work

Questions:	Yes	No	Don't know
Do you find nursing scientific research work important for development of nursing?	85,4*	7,3	7,7
Are you introduced to nursing scientific research work?	64,6	35,4	
Have you ever written an scientific work?	27,9	72,1	
Do you find nursing scientific research work important for your personal satisfaction?	64,3	17,9	17,8
Did you get knowledge about research methodology during your education?	79,2	18,5	2,3
In case you have opportunity to contribute to nursing discipline would you participate?	88,5	2,3	9,2

\*data were shown in percentages (%)

**TABLE [3]** Motivation for performing nursing research work

Motivation	n	%
Free time	60	46,15
Additional knowledge	54	41,54
Money	53	40,77
Support by the institution	1	0,77
MSc	1	0,77

## Discussion

Performing a nursing research work is extremely important because it allows nurses to develop knowledge and to justify nursing practice that is based on evidence [1].

Nurses have positive attitudes towards nursing research work, although most of them do not perform any research work. Furthermore, they think that nursing research is very important and has a big impact on personal satisfaction. Bjorkstrom and Hamrin [13] concluded that nurses generally have positive attitudes towards research. On the other hand, authors conclude that nurses do not perform a nursing research. They found discrepancies among participants in terms of age (younger nurses have more positive attitudes towards research) and the level of education (higher level of education indicates more positive attitudes towards research). Similar was found in the research conducted in Croatia in 2017. They concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in motivation for performing research work among older and younger nurses. Younger nurses have more positive attitudes towards nursing research than older nurses [14]. In the research conducted in Slovenia authors found out that nurses with a higher degree of education are more aware of the importance of nursing research. Nurses in Slovenia show a positive attitude towards nursing research work [15]. Another research was conducted in Sweden among 1054 nurses. The results show that nurses generally have positive attitudes towards research. Most of the respondents stated that they used

the research in practice, while 37% of them said they had never used research findings. Half of the respondents believe they have the ability to analyse scientific articles [16].

As a possible motivation actions nurses list more free time to conduct the research, additional knowledge about research in nursing, projects or researches that are payed, and support by the institutions. In conducted study in Portugal researchers concluded that big impact on motivation in nurses have work contract and additionally pays. Financials influence also personal life satisfaction [17].

In Croatia there is a gap in nursing education. Thus, nurses do not have needed knowledge for performing a nursing research work. Kalauz et al. [7] suggest that there is a need for a reform of a health care system and need for changing education for nurses in Croatia. There is also a need for establishing a PhD degree for nurses in order to expand nursing knowledge. Nurses should focus on these research fields: evidence based nursing, knowledge based development, increased focus on the outcomes of research and biophysical research, strengthening multidisciplinary and expanding use of research results [2]. Furthermore, in 2010 Šimunović et al. [5] proposed a new curriculum for all three levels of nursing education based on the evidence.

## Conclusion

We conclude that research work in nursing is in accordance with all the rules and guidelines necessary for the development of nursing. Why do not nurses in Croatia decide to do it? Is there a lack of motivation, lack of time, will, support?

Nursing research is important for the development of nursing as a science. Nurses can make significant changes and with their knowledge and experience contribute to the quality of care and to the development of nursing as a scientific discipline. With new knowledge nurses in Croatia could work on developing new strategies for a systematization of workplaces and consequently higher pays.

**Nema sukoba interesa**

**Authors declare no conflict of interest**

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