



Barriers and Facilitators to Nurses Research Involvement

A brief online survey exploring factors relating to
nursing involvement in conducting research.

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1. Executive summary

Research conducted by nurses is a critical component in the enhancement of ongoing high quality, safe patient care. There may be numerous barriers to the ability of nurses to be a part of research activities, which may have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is highly important to understand the factors that may act as barriers and facilitators to nursing involvement in research in order to better engage them in the conducting of studies. The Nursing Research Involvement Study was conducted by the Cabrini Monash University Department of Nursing Research at Cabrini Research from June 2022 to July 2022. All nursing staff were invited to participate.

This study distributed a brief online survey using the Barriers to Nurses' Participation in Research Questionnaire and several open-ended questions. At the close of the survey, 109 responses were received. Of those, 83% were female, 89% were Registered Nurses, and 40% worked full time. Over 90% believe that research is relevant to their work, however, over 70% believe there is a lack of time, incentive and financial support to undertake research. Further, more than 70% also believe there is a lack of access to research experts. Qualitative responses were analysed thematically. The themes that emerged in qualitative responses echo the findings of the quantitative analyses. The most important barriers for nurses involvement in research include lack of time, resources, support, incentive, confidence, and opportunities. Participants highlighted that clinical work was demanding and took precedence over research. Conversely, the most important facilitating factors were information provision, guidance, support, resources, time, engagement, and raising awareness. There are opportunities for improvement, specifically in the following areas: enhanced engagement with nurses working clinically to inform them of the support offered at Cabrini for involvement in research, ongoing encouragement across multiple levels for nursing-led research, and the provision of dedicated paid time for nurses to engage in research activities.

2. Research Team

The research team consisted of Associate Professor Philip Russo, Director of the Cabrini Monash University Department of Nursing Research at Cabrini Research, and Doctor Lucille Kerr, Research Fellow.

3. Funding

The study did not receive any funding.

4. Ethics Approvals

The low risk study was approved by the Cabrini Research Governance Office (04-12-05-22).

5. Study Objectives

The study aimed to explore the perspectives of nurses on the barriers and facilitators to their involvement in conducting research in order to elucidate the most effective ways to engage nursing staff in research projects.

6. The Study

Ongoing research is a fundamental component of the continued safe provision of high quality nursing care.[1] Research conducted by nurses is a long tradition, and is unique because of the insights obtained from providing care that is intimate and often for significant lengths of time.[2] Although nurses are aware of the importance of practice that is based on evidence, there are numerous barriers to individual nurses involvement in research activities.[1-4] These may come from different sources – they may be organisational, stemming from the environment of the ward, or at a personal level.[3, 4] A recent systematic review has emphasised the need for attention in this important area to continue encouraging nurses to be involved in research.[4] In order to gain a better understanding of the factors that act as barriers and facilitators to nursing research involvement, this study distributed a brief online survey using the Barriers to Nurses' Participation in Research Questionnaire and several open-ended questions.

a. Study Design

The study used a previously validated tool exploring barriers in undertaking research.[3] The survey covered the following: basic demographics such as gender, professional role experience and education, and barriers/facilitators to research participation. A series of statements were presented and a five point Likert scale was used to indicate level of agreement with the statement, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree . A series of open ended questions were also included.

b. Setting and sample

All nurses at Cabrini were invited to participate through direct email contact. Three follow up emails were sent during the survey period. The survey was also promoted through the Cabrini Bulletin (emailed to all staff) three times over the survey period. It is estimated that approximately 1800 nursing staff work across Cabrini.

c. Data Collection

Data was collected in June and July 2022, using a secure online REDCAP survey.

d. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the quantitative data. Simplified thematic analysis was conducted on the qualitative responses, which were brief survey comments.

7. Results

Participant details

In total, 109 responses were received (some respondents did not answer all questions). It is not possible to calculate an accurate response rate as we are uncertain how many staff saw and opened the email invitation or the advertisement in the Cabrini Bulletin. During the survey period, large numbers of nurses were being furloughed due to COVID-19, and many had taken pre-planned leave.

Of the respondents, 83% were female, 89% were Registered Nurses, 40% worked full time and 57% reported having a Bachelor's degree or higher. Table 1 lists the demographic details of the participants

Barriers to nursing research

Responses to statements

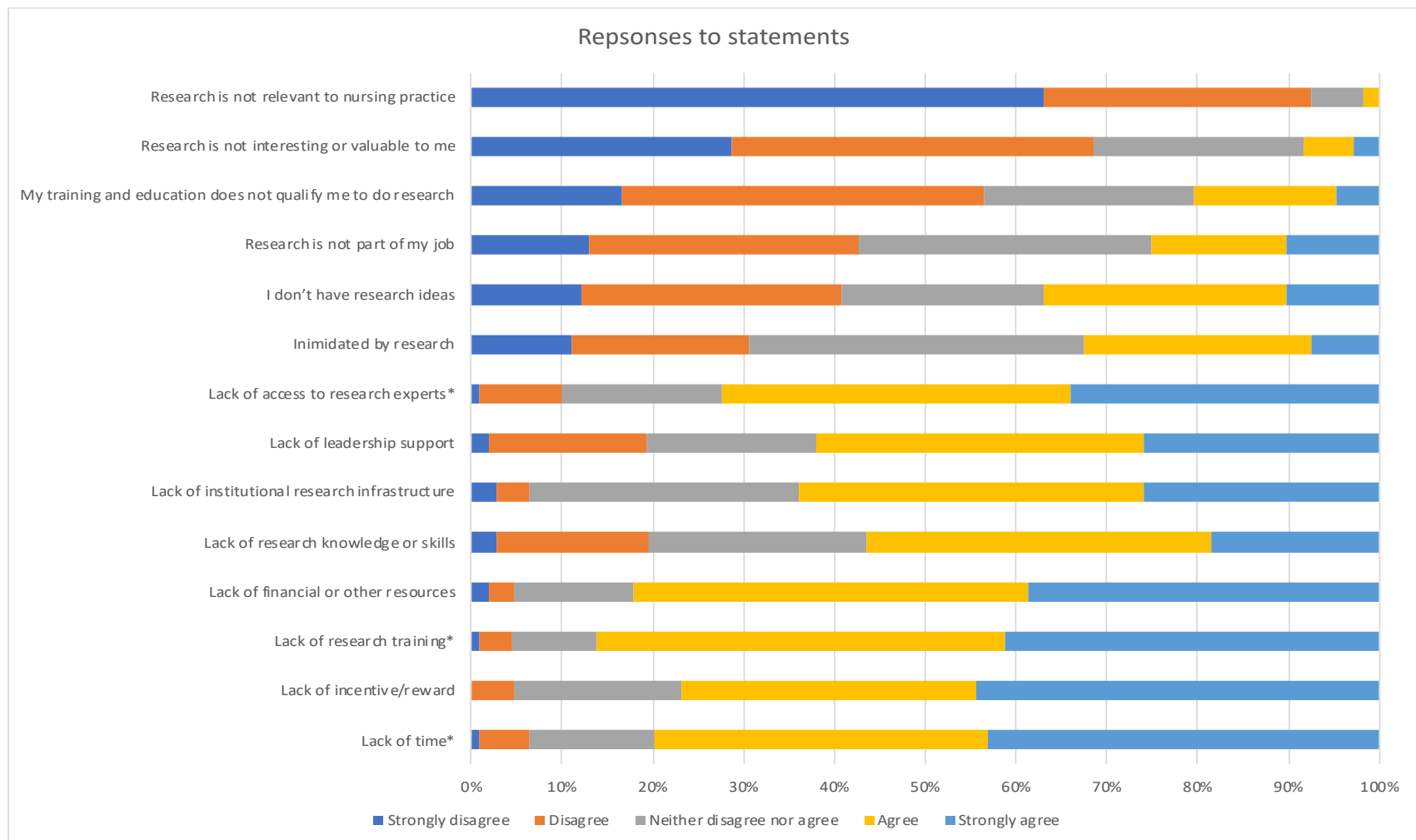
Over 70% of participants reported that they either strongly agreed or agreed that lack of time, incentive and reward, research training, financial support and access to research experts were major barriers to undertaking nursing research. Over 60% either strongly agreed or agreed that a lack of leadership support and institutional research infrastructure were barriers. Over 40% either strongly disagreed or disagreed that research is not part of their job. In response to the statement that research is not relevant to nursing practice, 93% either strongly disagreed or disagreed. Figure 1 displays the responses to all the statements.

Findings from open-ended questions

The most important factors acting as barriers that were highlighted in the qualitative responses reinforce the quantitative findings. Participants stated that they lacked time, resources (financial and infrastructural), support, incentive, confidence, training, and opportunities. Participants highlighted

Table 1: Participant Characteristics (n=109)

<i>Characteristic</i>		Frequency	Percent
<i>Gender</i>	Woman	91	83.5
	Man	15	13.8
	Non-binary or gender diverse	1	0.9
	Prefer not to say	2	1.8
<i>Age</i>	Under 40	51	46.8
	41-60	43	39.4
	Over 60	15	13.8
<i>What is your highest level of education</i>	Graduate Certificate	28	25.7
	Diploma of Nursing	11	10.1
	Bachelor of Nursing (+/- honors)	45	41.3
	Masters/PhD	17	15.6
	Other	8	7.3
<i>Are you a...?</i>	Registered Nurse	98	89.9
	Enrolled Nurse	11	10.1
<i>Years as a nurse</i>	<10 years	43	39.4
	10-20 years	21	19.3
	20+ years	45	41.3
<i>Area of Specialisation</i>	No specialisation	15	13.8
	Aged care/geriatrics	3	2.8
	Cardiac	6	5.5
	Emergency	3	2.8
	Intensive care	13	11.9
	Maternity/Obstetrics	2	1.8
	Medical	6	5.5
	Mental Health	5	4.6
	Neurological	4	3.7
	Oncology/Haematology	11	10.1
	Palliative Care	5	4.6
	Respiratory	3	2.8
	Surgical	10	9.2
	Theatre	16	14.7
	Urology	1	0.9
Other	6	5.5	
<i>Do you work...?</i>	Full-time	45	41.3
	Part-time	55	50.5
	Casual/bank	8	7.3
	Other	1	0.9



* indicates there were 109 responses. All other statements had 108 response

that clinical work was demanding and took precedence over research. Nurse participants also questioned whether research would ultimately be appreciated or of benefit and raised the concern that evidence was not always implemented in practice. The COVID-19 pandemic was mentioned by several participants who discussed the increased burn-out and stress.

Conversely, the most significant facilitating factors included information provision, training, guidance, support, resources, time, engagement, and raising awareness. Overwhelmingly, paid time away from the pressures of clinical work demands was seen as essential in the ability of nurses to be involved in research. Participants also mentioned that they would like to see an interest group or discussion forum established for those who want to be more involved in research.

Participant quotes

Nurses have the potential to conduct excellent and relevant research if only they are given the opportunities and recognition at all levels of experience and qualifications. One does not require a Master's degree or doctorate to have great ideas and curiosity that could benefit the health industry as a whole if explored.

Nurses at the bedside should be encouraged to do research as part of their everyday employment as we are best placed to see the areas that need to be researched.

Definitely need opportunities to learn and participate in nursing research. Nurse researchers who would assist in establishing a structure to allow nurses to participate even at a 'beginner' level.

No time and energy for research. The current COVID situation does not allow nurses to do any extra voluntary development practice. We are worn off enough already without financial and staffing support.

8. Use of the findings

The results indicate that more attention should be given to raising awareness in nursing staff at Cabrini of the opportunities for their involvement in research. Further to this, there should be ongoing support across multiple levels within the organisation to encourage nursing-led research. Clinical nurses should have dedicated, paid-time to engage in research activities, which may be sourced from their professional development days. A group for research-interested nurses should be established to foster a culture of research engagement – the survey asked if participants would like to leave their email to be involved in this, and the first steps have been taken towards establishing a nursing research interest group.

9. Dissemination

This findings from this study will be disseminated throughout Cabrini to relevant stakeholders and presented at Research week.

Acknowledgements

We would like to warmly acknowledge and thank all nurses who took the time to complete the survey. We are also very grateful for help we received in promoting the survey.

10. References

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