

## Nursing Journal Clubs in Greece; a way to get started in research and evidence based practice

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The purpose of professional journal clubs in health care has traditionally been twofold: to help providers to stay abreast of research and to improve their ability to critically evaluate published papers.<sup>1</sup> However, this is not all; sharing current knowledge and translating it into evidence based practice is the ultimate goal.<sup>2</sup>

Although nursing journal clubs are a well recognized quality improvement strategy, they are a rather new concept in the Greek nursing community. In fact, to the best of our knowledge, there is only one journal club that has recently been activated under the Hellenic Society of Nursing Research and Education (HSNRE), in two locations of Greece-Athens and Thessaloniki. More info about it can be found in the official site of HSNRE ([www.eenee.gr](http://www.eenee.gr)). This journal club mainly focuses on educating clinical nurses. Moreover, the faculty of the Technological Educational Institution of Athens Nursing School has recently adopted a journal club in their pre-graduate curriculum, as a powerful

tool for teaching evidence based nursing for students. These promising initiatives though, are just the beginning of a laborious shift of research “from bench to bedside”.

To assess the value and perspectives of participating in a journal club in Greece, we need to review the overall Greek nursing context in terms of research involvement. Although there are remarkable nurse researchers, the majority of nurses in Greece are not actively involved in research and evidence based practice. This has traditionally been a ‘privilege’ of the academic nursing society, faculty and academic institutions affiliates, as in many countries. However, what most nurses fail to understand is that research is not a somewhat “stiff” concept that can be just avoided or left only to ‘experts’, because it is an integral component of any science. But what is also true is that nurses often lack formal training in research or the skills to judge the scientific merit of a research study, have limited exposure to research

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journals, and very often feel uncomfortable with the statistics and as a consequence develop negative attitudes toward research<sup>3, 4</sup>. Negative attitudes have been associated with infrequent use of research in the practice setting<sup>4</sup> a finding that also seems to apply in the Greek nursing context.

In fact, most nurses focus in their clinical practice and daily routine, to the point that they practice according to their level of knowledge, basic training or (at best) according to what they are instructed (by almost anyone perceived as a superior or expert or by institutional policy). However, adopting “policies” or instructions that are not evidence based, without being able to assess their level of evidence, could be as dangerous as not having any policies and protocols at all. Also, in most cases, it is not a secret that nurses do not determine their practice environment and this has serious implications in their practice. Practicing in a “routine” mode is unfortunately the standard in many clinical areas and clinical practice is not frequently updated according to current evidence. Active participation in a nursing journal club can actually bridge the gap between evidence based and standard practice. The idea is that nurses, preferably from the same area of practice, meet on a regular basis and critically appraise

research papers related to issues of their daily practice. The format that each club follows may vary, but they all focus in thorough examination of the methodology and the results (included statistics).<sup>2, 5</sup> Therefore, it is a fine opportunity to have a peek in the research process, to learn how to read and critically appraise the current bulk of literature, as well as learn the latest evidence and advances. A journal club could educate participants in critical appraisal of scientific papers, so that they can incorporate findings in their settings.<sup>6</sup>

Another benefit relates on its impact on nursing protocols. Nursing protocols should be designed, constructed and implemented by nurses or by an equally balanced interprofessional team when required. Involving in a protocol team, which would meet and critically evaluate related research, requires skills and a certain scientific methodology. Participation in a journal club could provide these skills, as well as enhance the confidence levels and empowerment for this job.<sup>7</sup>

So, is there any future in journal clubs for nurses? The answer in this rather rhetoric relates to whether there is actually any future in nursing overall. If nursing decides to claim a better role in a radically shifting environment, the only

way is through evolution. Otherwise, nursing will eventually shrivel to a non rewarding aiding profession. Evolution in this case involves active participation in research and spontaneous implementation into clinical practice. From this point of view, nursing journal clubs are definitely an easy and methodic way to get started.

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