



HPNA Position Statement Role of Hospice and Palliative Nurses in Research

The Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association (HPNA):

- Acknowledges that research is essential to advance the science of hospice and palliative care to inform clinical practice.^{1,2}
- Believes that, regardless of where nurses practice, they can contribute systematic and thoughtful observations to support transdisciplinary hospice and palliative care research teams.³
- Recognizes that nurses, who are with patients and families more than any other discipline, can provide valuable input into the design, implementation, evaluation, dissemination, and critique of research.
- Acknowledges that nurses have a variety of roles which provide vital perspectives in identifying critical clinical issues that would benefit from research.
- Advocates that nurses are in ideal roles to lead, participate in, and/or contribute to research,^{1,2} evidence-based practice projects,⁴ quality-improvement initiatives,^{5,6} and program-evaluation activities⁶ to improve the delivery of palliative and hospice care.
- Supports the variety of roles for nurses in hospice and palliative research to ensure the delivery of high-quality palliative and hospice care for patients and families living with serious illness.⁷

Background

Patients and families should receive care that is based on the best available scientific research and evidence-based practice. Nurses can play an important role in promoting a climate of clinical inquiry to advance expert care in serious illness. Research is the foundation for excellent hospice and palliative nursing care⁸ where the goals of conducting nursing research^{1,3} are to improve care for patients and families living with serious illness. The evidence base for hospice and palliative nursing depends upon rigorous transdisciplinary research, in which hospice and palliative nurses play multiple and varied roles. All nurses providing direct care to hospice and palliative care patients should be centrally involved in generating new knowledge, evaluating existing science, and applying high-quality research findings in practice. Furthermore, *The Future of Nursing 2020-2030* report emphasizes the role of nurses as powerful leaders in interprofessional groups, as well as influencers of change in relevant areas where more research is needed.⁹ These include: health equity, disaster preparedness and public health emergency response, healthcare costs, nursing workforce, and nurse well-being.⁹

By virtue of their education and clinical expertise, nurses are uniquely prepared to play crucial roles in research.^{9,10} Nurses should actively participate in research activities to the fullest extent of their education and training.⁹⁻¹¹ Consistent with *Palliative Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice*, hospice and palliative nurses should “integrate evidence and research findings into practice,” which includes the following nurse competences:^{11, p.62}



- Articulates the values of palliative research (particularly within serious illness care, palliative care, and hospice care) and its application relative to the healthcare setting and practice.
- Identifies palliative-related questions in the healthcare setting and practice that could be answered by nursing research.
- Uses current evidence-based nursing knowledge, including research findings, to guide palliative nursing practice.
- Incorporates evidence when initiating changes in palliative nursing practice.
- Participates, as appropriate to education level and position, in the formulation of evidence-based practice through research.
- Appraises nursing research for optimal application in practice and the healthcare setting.
- Shares peer-reviewed research findings with colleagues to integrate knowledge into nursing practice.

Although there has been tremendous growth in hospice and palliative care research, many gaps remain. Since 2009, HPNA has established research agendas that are updated to current gaps/needs every four years in effort to: (1) provide focus for researchers to conduct meaningful scientific and quality-improvement initiatives and inform evidence-based practice, (2) guide organizational funding, and (3) illustrate to other stakeholders the importance of nursing research foci.¹² Aligned with the *Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care*,¹³ HPNA research agendas are developed to give direction for research, to highlight significant gaps in care, and to illuminate much-needed research to advance expert care in serious illness.

In conclusion, regardless of one's nursing role and educational training, all hospice and palliative nurses should consider the role of research and should be involved across all aspects of the research process, including the following:

Education

- Hospice and palliative nurses should continuously improve skills in the critical evaluation and translation of research findings.

Clinical Practice

- Hospice and palliative nurses should apply intellectual curiosity to their clinical observations.

Leadership

- Hospice and palliative nurses should actively participate in discussions of new research findings at local, regional, and national professional meetings.



Research

- Hospice and palliative nursing research should be person-centered¹⁴ and related to nursing practice to build the evidence base for person- and family-centered care.¹⁵
- All hospice and palliative nurses, regardless of their education or credentials, should play an important role in patient- and family-centered research.
- Hospice and palliative nurses should implement high-quality, evidence-based practice.
- Hospice and palliative nurses should be able to discuss the implications of research with patients and families.
- Hospice and palliative nurses should disseminate palliative care research through presentations, publications, consultations, case discussions, and journal clubs.
- All transdisciplinary hospice and palliative care research teams should include hospice and palliative nurses who are actively engaged in clinical practice.
- Hospice and palliative nurses should play a key role on transdisciplinary research teams, such as:
 - Identifying nursing-related problems sensitive to nursing interventions and palliative care research.
 - Contributing to research design.
 - Participating in data collection for palliative research.
 - Participating in the informed consent process.
 - Ensuring that studies are ethical in recruitment and retention of patients with serious illness and their families.
 - Critically analyzing, critiquing, and interpreting research for possible application to practice.
 - Synthesizing research for other healthcare providers.
 - Incorporating research findings in the development of clinical nursing policies, procedures, and standards of practice for patient and family care.

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This statement reflects the best available evidence at the time of writing or revisions.

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