How nurses in my country contribute to clinical research and the support they need based on the study I conducted regarding the utilisation of the Nursing process by registered nurses in local level primary health care practice.

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Background to the problem

It is essential that registered nurses have sound knowledge and skills regarding all the elements of PHC to enable them to render a proper service to the community at clinics, health centres, outreach points and district hospitals (Du Toit & Van Staden, 2009).

Like in other nursing care setting, nurses in Primary health care are expected to do research in order to facilitate decision making and change implementation (McGloin & McLeod, 2010; Fraser & Cooper, 2009).

Problem Statement

It is not clear whether registered nurses utilise the nursing process effectively in the provision of PHC, as adopted by the government, as a new and better strategy to render health care services in the country.

Purpose and objectives

Purpose
The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the utilization of the Nursing Process by registered nurses in local level Primary health care practice in Namibia and to develop strategies to support registered nurses in this regard.
Objectives
The objectives of the study were:

To explore and describe the way in which registered nurses in clinics, healthcare centres and outreach posts in the health districts use the nursing process as regards PHC delivery;

- To determine how supervisors perceive the utilisation of the nursing process by registered nurses with regard to PHC;
- To identify the constraints that registered nurses are faced with when utilising the nursing process with regard to the delivery of PHC;
- To develop a conceptual framework on which to base the formulation of relevant strategies,
- To incorporate the study findings into the development of strategies to support PHC registered nurses in their utilisation of the nursing process.
- To validate the appropriateness of these strategies.

Research design and methods

Design
A quantitative research approach using a survey design with self-report questionnaire was used.

Methods

Population and Sample
The population comprised two groups namely, 236 registered nurses working in local-level PHC facilities and 39 registered nurse supervisors, who supervised the registered nurses in these facilities.
**Study sample and sample selection**
As a result of the restricted number of participants, the population and the sample were the same for this study and there was no sample selection.

**Data collection**
The data were collected making use of two questionnaires.

**Data analysis**
Descriptive statistics, t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were done.

**Findings**
Research was one of those functions that were classified as areas of concern, needing urgent action.

The rating of each function was considered in the light of the percentage of participants who had rated the fulfilment of such function as below average as compared to those who had rated the same function as average and higher. If a function were rated by more than 20% of the participants as below average, then this function was categorised as a function in terms of which “urgent action is necessary”. This implies that less than 80% of the participants would have rated the function at average and higher.

The reasons cited for not conducting research included the following: no time to do so as a result of heavy workload at the health facility, lack of knowledge, ignorance regarding when and where to do it and lack of involvement of registered nurses in research.

Table 1.1 below indicates the percentage of responses that rated research as below average.

Table 1.1: Percentage of responses rated research as below average

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of concern</th>
<th>Phase of the nursing process</th>
<th>Percentages rated below average</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carry out research</td>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>36.5</td>
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The implication is that if research is not conducted problems may go unnoticed, no solutions to problems will be found and/or no improvements will be effected. However, the supervisors also claimed that there was an element of inadequate insight to recognise the contribution to research at facility or community level by, for example, keeping accurate statistics/health information; analysing the disease trends reflected in the daily clinic records of patients; recording all cases seen; and reporting suspected outbreaks.

A strategy developed to support registered nurses in local Primary health care practice in my country include the following:

**Implementation/actions to be taken:**

- Graduate registered nurses should assist nurses in identifying possible areas of research within their units and then to carry out such research with the aim of enhancing their understanding of the problems they encounter in their daily practice.

- Registered nurses involvement in clinical research is crucial for the development of the skills required in the implementation of a research-based nursing practice.

- Registered nurses should be encouraged to study further so that they may gain more knowledge and skills about research.

- The formation of district and regional research committees/forums for nurses should be encouraged through the employers, nurses’ professional associations and the local university.

- The provision of more staff posts to minimise the workload of registered nurses should be championed so as to enable registered nurses some time to do research where staff shortages are cited as a reason for their not being involved in or contributing to research.

- Quality assessment and quality improvement systems should be put in place in order to ensure that the research work of registered nurses is peer reviewed.

- Research findings should be disseminated in the practice setting to encourage registered nurses to appreciate research work and to adopt innovations resulting from relevant research results.
- PHC supervisors should take a lead in supporting research activities because any course of action is generally easier and more accepted if it is carried out in an official capacity.

- The nursing profession in the country is advised to strengthen nursing professional associations/organisations in order to ensure professional integrity and recognition, as well as to exercise strong professional discipline, peer education and review.

**Outcome:** Greater participation of registered nurses in meaningful research activities