**NURSES IN RESEARCH, IMPORTANCE AND WAYS TO ENCOURAGE MORE NURSES TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

**Introduction:**

The role of Nurses in research is very crucial towards the actualization of evidenced-based research findings. Nurses at various levels of learning are encouraged to embrace research as a way of bridging the gap between knowledge and practice. Many reforms in the nursing profession are as a result of the implementation of research findings and the more participation of nurses in the research process. Nurses have continued to impact favourable in research by being willing to undertake studies in virgin area. They have also explored various fields of human endeavor like Agriculture, Psychology, Medicine and Sociology to mention but a few. They have also continued to incorporate all these areas in the successful care of patients. The result of more nurses participation in research is evident in the increased roles, autonomy and more involvement of nurses in the decision making process of patients and clients.

The first nurse theorist/researcher Florence Nightingale, whose research in the 1850s focused on soldiers’ morbidity and mortality during the Crimean war, led to the amazing discovery of the need to modify the environment for the sick. This modification included amongst other things the cleanliness of the surroundings, ventilation, clean water and adequate diet. It is interesting to note that the sick soldiers started responding to treatment when the above mentioned research findings were implemented. The death tolls reduced drastically. Nursing research has continued to experience boast up till this day. In 1959 Majorie Simpson started the first help-group for nurse researchers and it was later christened the Research Discussion Group (Hopps, 1994). Presently, this group has progressed to the point of becoming the Research Society of the Royal College of Nursing till this day in the UK.

**Research realities**

Across the globe, nurses are actively involved in research and their impact is felt by the end users of these research findings. Nevertheless, nursing research is never without challenges. There are numerous difficulties associated with nursing research, especially in developing countries around the world. In Africa poverty, ignorance, corruption and the lack of motivation of research nurses are among the numerous challenges nurses face in successfully carrying out a research. Examining a few of these points, one will appreciate what needs to be done to encourage more nurses from developing countries to participate in research.

Poverty is rife in Africa and as such, people tend to shy away from capital intensive projects like building, road construction and so forth. The same could be said of nursing research in developing countries. Majority of nurses from these countries are not well paid and as such,
may not be able to afford the huge financial burden involved in carrying out some of these researches. In the light of the foregoing, I suggest that nurses welfare should be reviewed to enable them embark on some research. More allocation should also be made to research nurses.

The second factor is the ignorance of either the patients or nurses in developing countries of the importance of research for policy implementation, practice, education or management. As it were, nurses’ research is really complex. This complexity can be seen from the inability of the nursing profession to develop its own body of research, owing to the fact that they are a part of interprofessional team and in different healthcare settings. In Nigeria for instance, more than 70% of the nursing workforce is recruited from the nursing schools scattered all over the country. These schools are rather deficient in theory and research. They offer a diploma at graduation. The type of training obtainable from these institutions is narrow and less research orientated. This type of training has made it appear as if nurses from these institutions are not interested in research or are ignorant of its benefits. In contrast, nurses from the universities with a baccalaureate degree are polyvalent in their training with a broad based theory, that is supported by research.

I have in 2010/2011 done some researches in nursing. These include "The Factors Militating Against Breastfeeding Mothers in Their Practice of Exclusive Breastfeeding (EBF) in Amagunze, Nkanu East L.G.A Enugu Nigeria, and The Factors Inhibiting The Nutrition Pattern of Primigravidas in Ukehe, Igbo etiti L.G.A Enugu to mention but a few. In both researches, I was able to sample a total of 820 women respectively. In the first research, a sample size of 820 women who attended antenatal clinics (ANC), in Amagunze was interviewed over a period of 6 months. From the pilot study conducted by me at a sub-urban clinic in Enugu, a total of 50 questionnaires were shared and the return rate of 100% brought insight into the factors that are likely to militate against EBF for mothers in that area. Using a convenient sampling technique, I shared a total of 810 questionnaires with a return rate of 100%. From the data analysis, 70% of the breastfeeding mothers identified the lack of adequate knowledge of the importance of EBF as the cause for their inability to breastfeed exclusively. An amazing 90% of respondents faulted their culture as the major cog on the wheel of the practice EBF. Two third of the women said that their socio-economic status has a significant effect on them. Then also, 40% of respondents said that the government is to blame for the problems associated with EBF. Conversely, a few of the mothers who represented a minority saw the need to exclusively breastfeed their young ones. This group of educated mothers has their own challenges too. These include tight work schedules, and uncomfortable workplace breastfeeding arena that makes it difficult for especially new mothers to breastfeed their babies before the glaring eyes of others. From the forgoing, I suggested that there was a need for public enlightenment campaigns using different mediums of communication to reach out to the grass root. In doing
this, nurses must be incorporated in this campaign as they remain indispensable in this all important struggle to encourage more mothers to breastfeed exclusively. As patients' advocates, nurses are in the fore banner of client education. Another suggestion was for government at all levels to live up to their responsibility of providing adequate healthcare facilities and the necessary manpower to manage them. There is influx of nurses into the urban areas, thereby leaving the rural areas in want of these healthcare professionals. More research need to be done in these rural areas and the best possible way to get a better result, is being involved. Little wonder why, there are fewer nurses willing to undertake researches in these areas. Government should therefore provide basic amenities in these rural areas in order to make life more meaningful for researchers in those areas.

The research on “The Factors Inhibiting the Nutrition Pattern of Primigravidas in Ukehe, Igbo Etiti L.G.A Enugu State Nigeria” revealed that many local women do not take advantage of their rich diversity of food. They either eat too little or too much. These poor eating habits have resulted to mothers giving birth to underweight or overweight babies. The incidence of low birth babies was on the increase as statistics show that 68% of mothers from Ukehe have been giving birth to babies with low birth weights and macrosomic babies are not left out in the list too. A whopping 98% of primigravidas in Ukehe ate more carbohydrates food than protein and vitamin rich diets. Despite the fact that the people of this community are blessed with foods that are rich in proteins, vitamins and carbohydrates, they still do not eat much of these diets to balance their nutrition. Hence, one is motivated to ask why the inability to eat these things. It is on record that local foods such as fio-fio, okpa, beans and vegetables, as well as fruits are readily available. These foods are good sources of proteins (plant) and vitamins. The strongest factor affecting the readiness of mothers to eat healthy diets is associated with their culture, poverty, and knowledge deficit about the benefits of these foods. Culture is indeed a strong factor in Africa, and in Nigeria it is even stronger. More than 80% of primigravidas in Ukehe said that their culture forbade a pregnant woman from eating snail, eggs and certain sea foods. These cultural beliefs were based on the premise that eating such food like snail causes drooling of the saliva in the newborn, premature death and some kind of spiritual attack. All these repugnant cultures have made it difficult for mothers to eat well. The resultant effect is a malnourished mother and child. Another kettle of fish was the people’s ignorance or knowledge deficit. The inability of pregnant women to identify good sources of proteins, vitamins and carbohydrates is worrisome and has placed an urgent need to educate these women. There is no gain saying that nurses are indispensable in the health of a nation. In the rural areas, they are even more needed to spearhead various laudable programmes of government like immunization plus days (IPDS).

My research has so far booed openly the harsh realities of delinquent cultural inclination of the people and its associated negative consequences. Maternal and child morbidity and mortality
are on the increase. With this type of research and a host more, nurses are better able to understand their patients/clients and to deliver nursing care in the best possible way they can. Nevertheless, fewer than more nurses are willing to undertake research in developing countries world over. The reason for this is not farfetched. Nurses in developing countries do not have a good welfare package. Doing research in these countries is like a time spent not appreciated, since some of these research findings are never implemented. For more nurses to be encouraged to venture into research, nursing education must be brought to par with others in the health sector. With more and more degree nurses sprouting here and there, nurses are becoming aware of research and embracing it as well. Research is a viaduct between knowledge and practice. Research is the bedrock of good medicine. Hence, government should lay much emphasizes on nurses' research by way of providing additional fund to sponsor nurses who may be willing to undertake research in certain areas, but are unable, due to economic reasons. Nurses from poor socio-economic regions can be granted scholarships to study in reputable universities abroad with emphasis on research. Apart from the aforementioned points, nurses can also be encouraged to go into research by granting them more autonomy in their role performance. Of course, this point is in congruent with making the university education compulsory for all nurses in these regions. Nurses’ autonomy when granted will encourage more graduate nurses (baccalaureate) to go into research like their counterparts in the medical profession who have autonomy to do consultancy; that nomenclature is non-existent in Nigeria as a case study. If nurses with PhD, MSc and so forth are allowed to lecture students on clinical postings, then the reality of research findings can present itself on different clinical issues that they may have researched upon in times past. In conclusion, the government from these regions must be responsible to the plight of its citizens. Much to my chagrin, there has been a power tussle between the government and nurses with respect to according nurses their right of place. For example, the graduate nurse internship has hitherto become a mirage in Nigeria. How then can nurses be motivated to go into research when they are not encouraged by the government to do so? Implementation of the graduate nurse internship will help both the nurses and the interns to apply themselves in the profession by using evidence-based research study results to cater for the patients holistically and transfer knowledge as well.