

Clinical Practice

Comment



Sian Rodger

'Research should be driven by front-line health professionals'

What is the primary driver for research? A recent experience made me think about this issue. Is research driven by the desire for academic accolades or is it to help patients?

I am a ward-based nurse and have worked with the same client group for 20 years. I enjoy my job immensely and am passionate about the work I do.

Recently, I formulated a research proposal that would hopefully reduce post-spinal cord injury complications and improve delivery of information and education to patients. I am planning to investigate how we can educate our patients more effectively – looking at different formats that make use of technology, such as e-learning and apps.

I am in the process of applying for Integrated Research Application System approval. The aim is to reduce post-injury complications and for patients to have accessible sources of information at the touch of a button, which I am really excited about. I was asked to present it at a research forum with a number of other health professionals, one of whom presented their proposal ahead of me. The research idea followed on from an MSc and was to involve a particular client group. During the questions after the presentation the presenter stated that, ultimately, they wanted to use this research to get a higher academic qualification.

I felt disappointed, as it seemed that the driver for this research was for the researcher's own benefit. Should the research go ahead if any benefit to the client group came second? There would be benefit to the client group and the NHS as a whole – but this should be the priority, not a by-product.

The strong link between research and academia is hugely important but should it

be the primary reason for any research? If the research will benefit a particular client group, should it matter that it is driven by the needs of an individual researcher? Should it matter that grants are being used to fund research for this purpose?

Wearing my rose-tinted glasses, I naïvely felt that the benefit of research should be for the client group, and that publishing and academic qualification should come second. Maybe this is because I had not planned to use my research to gain further qualification but to address a need identified in clinical practice.

I had never really engaged in any research before this – the focus of my study is my client group and trying to improve the outcomes of the care we deliver. Any other benefits to my career are secondary. On the other hand, the other person presenting their proposal at the research forum was already highly qualified in research and had strong university links. We were coming to the start of our research projects from different paths.

What should be the drivers for research? How do we bridge the gap between what ward-based nurses want to investigate and university-driven research. How do we reconcile the different agendas? How can we make research inviting for all health professionals, which, in turn, will benefit the patients and the NHS as a whole?

Front-line nursing staff are best placed to see gaps in service provision, improvements that could be made to benefit clients and undertake research with the support of academia, making it of equal benefit for all involved. **NT**

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CPD activities



Journal club

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Self-assessment

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Archive pick



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A story predicting the number of people aged 85 and over needing round-the-clock care will double by 2035 ([Bit.ly/NTOlder2035](https://bit.ly/NTOlder2035)) highlighted the need to prepare health and social services to cope. While many of us will live into our 80s and beyond, we will not necessarily spend our sunset years running marathons – or even breaking into a stride to catch the bus.

Much of the round-the-clock care is likely to be provided by nurses, who will also play a crucial role in preventing health deterioration by helping people avoid or manage long-term conditions.

Our Clinical page on nursingtimes.net lists around 50 zones containing a wealth of information on aspects of caring for older people. The zones organise articles from our archive into clinical topics, nursing roles and healthcare settings, enabling you to easily keep up to date on your area of interest or read up on unfamiliar areas. They include COPD, diabetes, long-term conditions, public health, district and community nurses and older people's nurses.

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