
Teresa Moreno Casbas
Unidad de coordinación y desarrollo de la Investigación en Enfermería (Investén-isciii)
Instituto de Salud Carlos III
Sinesio Delgado, 6 - Pabellón 3
28029 Madrid (SPAIN)
mmoreno@isciii.es
www.isciii.es/investen

Introduction

Nursing research education in Spain

In Spain, there are no MN/MSc or PhD in nursing programmes, although nurses can earn doctorates in other fields if they have a Master's degree in nursing. Five schools of nursing have already started Master's programmes in Nursing, but they are not yet recognised by the Ministry of Education. With regard to undergraduate educational programmes, of the 74 schools that responded a national survey in 1999, 15 (23%) did not teach research methodology as a subject; 38 schools (58%) had one course in research methodology; 12 schools (18%) offered two courses; and one school offered three courses. In 20 schools, research methodology was a compulsory course, and in 37, it was optional. Aside from research methodology, schools offered courses in statistics, epidemiology and computer software. The median number of credits for these subjects is five (1 credit= 10 hours) and the median number of nursing students per class is 70.

In addition, 21 schools offered post-graduate education in the form of courses that have a median of 20 hours duration. In most schools that offer these courses, qualitative and quantitative methods are taught, although quantitative methods prevail.

Moreover, 58 hospitals have organised nursing research courses in the last 5 years for continuing education; 95% of them taught quantitative methodology. The median course duration was 60 hours (from 30 to 180). Approximately 2,880 nurses have undertaken these professional-training courses.

Nursing research at the Institute of Health “Carlos III” (ISCIII)

According to the Spanish General Health Law 14/1986, this Institute is the main unit of scientific and technical support for the Ministry of Heath and Consumer Affairs and for the Regional Health Services. The ISCIII functions are:

1. Research
2. Control of Public Health Services
3. Epidemiological Surveillance
4. Health Information
5. Evaluation of Health Technologies

The Health Research Funding Agency (Fondo de Investigacion Sanitaria - FIS) is part of the ISCIII. In Spain, FIS provides nationwide economic support for proposals for biomedical research projects. FIS also facilitates international academic and professional training, especially to young researchers.
In 1987, this agency started carrying out a series of initiatives to incorporate nurses into health research. These initiatives were:

1. To allow nurses to apply for grants as principal investigator to conduct research projects.
2. To incorporate nurses into the Technical Evaluation Commissions.
3. To fund a Working Group for Nursing Research. This group would publish a National Report about Nursing Research in Spain.

In 1996, FIS commissioned a multidisciplinary group (5 nurses and 2 physicians) to draw up a document on "Nursing Research". The document about the current state of Nursing Research in Spain made specific recommendations in order to stimulate and develop the integration of nursing research into the National Health System (NHS). This report took into account the recommendations issued by the European Health Committee (Council of Europe). Hence, in 1996, the administration of ISCIII created the Group INVESTEN, establishing its functions and objectives.

Still in this same year, INVESTEN started its work with 12 members (11 nurses and 1 physician), which represent most of the Autonomous Communities of the country and multiple settings where nursing work is developed (primary, secondary and tertiary care, management, research, and educational institutions).

At the same time, the national research units model created in 1994 (called REUNI) to promote research in hospitals and primary care centres established, that such research units should have nurses as part of their staff.

In January 2000, the Working Group INVESTEN became a formal structure of the ISCIII, called "Centre for Coordination and Development of Nursing Research (Investén-isciii)".

The Centre for the Coordination and Development of Nursing Research (Investén-isciii)

Mission
The Mission of the Unit consists of developing a national strategy that organizes and facilitates nursing research. This strategy has as its fundamental aim to integrate nursing research into clinical practice. This national strategy is composed by the following elements:

1. To stimulate the production and development of research.
2. To establish nursing research education opportunities
3. To use existing resources (National School of Public Health, Research Unit Network, etc)
4. To develop links with other research organisations
5. To implement multidisciplinary research
6. To collaborate with international groups.
7. To collaborate in the design, formulation and implementation of national policies for the development of nursing research.

Functions
- To advice, professionals interested in research as well as agencies, public, and private institutions interested in nursing research.
- To educate nurses, in a close relationship with other institutions.
- To disseminate with resources, activities, bibliographical databases, research results, etc.
To coordinate and to develop existing and new projects, organising them under research clusters and research lines and promoting the development of new projects in well-established areas of study.

Structure
1. Steering group. It coordinates the development of the Centre, meeting at least every two months. People in charge of different areas compose this group.
2. Main collaborators. They collaborate with the persons in charge of areas; at least every six months there is a meeting with the main collaborators and one specific meeting for areas.
3. Advisory group. This is a consulting organism that meets annually and it is composed by researchers who are principal investigators funded by FIS, persons of well-established scientific relevance, and younger researchers. The above-mentioned committee has a maximum number of 25 members.

Working Areas
The Centre is structured in three areas:
1. Consultation and Education Area, that the main objectives are:
   - To identify nurses’ research education needs; to coordinate and unify educational research initiatives.
   - To advise the Centre about the content of courses and educational programmes.
   - To elaborate a biannual educational plan for the members of the Centre itself and to evaluate each year the fulfilment of educational targets.
   - To identify researchers who can advise in the planning and implementation of research projects and, this way, respond to the needs of young researchers or those exploring new fields of study.
   - To identify and access research experts who can participate in the evaluation of projects and be jury members for research awards.
2. Dissemination and Communication Area, that the main objectives are:
   - To disseminate the different activities of the Centre on the Institute web page and to maintain this page updated.
   - To maintain and overlook the ‘Discussion List Investén-isciii’.
   - To collaborate with the Institute projects, what allows the Centre to achieve a great dissemination of its activities, use of shared resources and shared agreements of collaboration.
   - To facilitate and to support the dissemination of research project results to health professionals as well as the population.
   - To organise and to evaluate the annual ‘Spanish Nursing Research Conference’.
3. Promotion and Coordination Area, that the main objectives are:
   - To identify research groups in the field of the nursing and the issues of interest for these groups.
   - To coordinate research groups, organising them under four main research fields: Clinical practice, Health promotion, Administration and management, and Professional development.
   - To facilitate research projects’ submission in which the principal investigator is a nurse.
   - To collaborate with institutions that request help in the establishment and development of high-priority nursing research initiatives.
Activities developed during the last six years (1996-2001)

During these years, we have developed different activities in order to: encourage research in nursing-related issues, stimulate multidisciplinary research teams, and promote a higher co-ordination between initiatives led by nurse researchers. The activities described below illustrate the achievements of the Centre. They have been categorized in five themes:

1. - Training Activities
   - Agreement of Collaboration with the University of Montreal and the University of Toronto
     The Institute of Health Carlos III has signed an agreement with two Canadian Faculties of Nursing (University of Montreal and University of Toronto). The aim of the Agreement is to stimulate nursing research and to make possible the academic and professional exchange between these Institutions. Until December 2001, we have funded 19 nurses from different Spanish regions, from distinct clinical areas to undertake Master's and PhD studies.
   - Methodological courses
     We have organised more than 30 training sessions in order to improve the methodological knowledge about both qualitative and quantitative research among nurse clinicians. Moreover, several members of the Centre have collaborated as lecturers in research methodology courses organised by health institutions and universities.

2. - Advisory Activities
   - Political Advisory activities
     Preparation of the document “Current Development of Clinical Nursing Research” in 1996. We conducted a literature review followed by a fieldwork that led to national guidelines and recommendations for the establishment of a national strategy for the development of nursing research.
     Definition of nursing research priorities employing a Delphi methodology, in 1999. The participants were selected based on their experience and their involvement in nursing research. Six groups of professionals were identified:
       1. Presidents of professional and scientific associations
       2. Nursing Directors from different levels of care (specialised and primary care)
       3. Directors of Nursing Schools
       4. Authors of original articles published in 1997 in Spanish nursing journals
       5. Members of the ROL and INVESTEN Internet discussion list
       6. Professionals who had previously contacted the Investén-iscii Group
     Ten research priorities were identified. In addiction three areas has been highlighted by nursing professionals as of great importance to research (Strategies to improve nursing research, Strategies to promote nursing work in the national Health System and the need to measure the impact of training in nurses daily work).
   - Professional Advisory Activities
     We offered methodological and technical support to various research projects and departments. Many of these projects were submitted to public or independent funding agencies and were funded.

3. - Research Projects Activities
   Between 1989 and 2000, 602 nursing research projects (3.04% of the total) were submitted to FIS (one of the few Health Funding Agencies which can be used by Spanish nurses) and of these 38.2% were funded. We should note that the number of

As strategy to coordinate nursing researchers, we have submitted and coordinate several multi-site projects involving more than 150 nurses from 23 research units (National survey on Tuberculin skin testing, Compliance of antibiotic treatment in children in Primary care, etc...), two of which have been submitted to the European Union Funding Agencies.

4. - Dissemination Activities
Taking advantage of the possibilities of new technologies, we have undertaken three initiatives:

- The most important activity in this area was the creation of a web site, which provides many resources for nursing research (www.isciii.es/investen).
- We have created a free-access bibliographical database with the complete scientific production of Spanish nursing to date and all funded research projects (bdie.isciii.es).
- The distribution list Investén (with 200 subscribers of 9 countries) is a part of these activities. The aims of the list are:
  - To stimulate methodological reflexivity and criticism by the researchers
  - Exchange experiences among nursing researchers
  - To promote cooperative, multi-site studies
  - To facilitate the resolution of doubts and consultation on methodological issues
  - To inform about new research projects

In order to spread, to exchange ideas and experiences, and to promote contacts among nurse researchers, we organise an annual National Nursing Research Conference in which more than 200 professionals participate.

In addition, we have published five articles related to methodological and funding issues and participated in more than 45 national and international congresses.

5. International activities
- “Building a European Nursing Research Strategy”

“Building a European Nursing Research Strategy” was the title of the Euro-Conference that took place in 1999, in Salamanca, Spain. This Euro-Conference was organised by Investén. Representatives from 14 European countries attended the Conference. Altogether, 92 persons participated, including one guest from the United States and one from Canada. Twenty-six of these participants were Young Researcher Grant recipients.

In 1996, the Council of Europe initiated a study on nursing research, involving seven European countries (Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom). Based on this study, the committee of experts formulated recommendations regarding nursing research that were adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 15th February 1996 at the 558th meeting of Ministers’ Deputies (Recommendation n. (96) 1 - 1996). In the wake of this landmark event for nursing, no European meeting had been organised with the exclusive goal of furthering the discussion on nursing research before 1999. In view of the above and the Council of Europe’s recommendations, we strongly believed that it was time to hold such a conference, involving all European Union member states as well as other associated states, and to update the report drawn up in 1996. These are the reasons that prompted us to apply for EC funds to host this Conference. The main purpose was to
strengthen cross-border collaboration among European nursing researchers, in order to promote and develop nursing research into the next years.

Before the conference, the organising committee sent a questionnaire to the participants from European Community countries, in order to gather information on the current situation of nursing research in their respective countries.

The replies to this questionnaire were the starting point for the work developed by the groups. Along three days, the workgroups analysed the problems identified in each country and discussed the problems they share and later they elaborated proposals to improve nursing research.

Although the recommendations of the Euro-Conference have been published and disseminated in all European countries, I would like to share with you some of the most relevant conclusions.

1.- Differences in educational systems among European countries made difficult to create generalisations on what would be the best nursing-research support structure and organisation. There is a shared need of a full integration of nursing research into health services research, at all levels of care.

2.- Implementation of the findings of high-quality research was shown to improve outcomes for patients, families, communities, and to improve processes that are directly related to such outcomes. Other elements that researchers should consider while developing and implementing research are the context of care provision happens, the efficacy of distinct strategies of implementation, and cross-cultural similarity and diversity in Europe.

To improve integration of research into practice, the group called for: clinical-practice guidelines, protocols and care pathways based on scientific evidence; creation of joint European policies for the dissemination of systematic reviews, in tandem with a Pan-European translation and dissemination network; development of strategies to close the gap between “academic” and “practitioner” nurses, and at the same time acknowledging that different levels of research literacy were appropriate to different levels of nurse education.

3.- It was also stressed that when undergraduate education was university-based, there was a corresponding rise in the quota of nursing research in the curriculum. Without research, nursing could not advance as a profession and as a science.

The participants felt that clinicians and researchers should liaise to provide mutual feedback on aspects of practice and research that could improve the quality of care. The participants gave special attention to young researchers’ needs. There were not enough teachers and experienced researchers in nursing to offer guidance to new researchers. One possible solution might be staff sharing co-operative agreements between European universities. Language posed an important barrier in some countries. In the final analysis, there was still no way to prepare young researchers without the use of English. A key issue for training young researchers was free movement throughout Europe. Moreover, true mobility depends on the recognition of foreign qualifications once students returned to their home countries. To foster mobility, more study grants are needed to enable nurses to pursue education abroad.

4.- It was difficult to assess the impact of the Strasbourg recommendations on priorities for funding agencies, but what was far clearer was their impact as a lobbying tool for developing and funding nursing research, increasing awareness and as a departure point for developing national strategies. In general, it was the national level the major source of funding and only a few number of countries with regional government structures had funds available for health and nursing research.
5.- In order to establish priorities in nursing research, the aims of the Working Group were to prepare a report for EC focused on identifying priorities for collaborative nursing research in Europe and, specifically, on priorities that can attract EC funding. It was decided that priority subjects for Pan-European nursing research should aim at: Generating knowledge and reflecting basic philosophical tenets of the nursing discipline, and nursing unique contribution to healthcare; Relating to 'major' healthcare problems and issues (as defined by nursing or other priorities) and relating to 'major' healthcare problems and issues of multinational relevance. I.e.: Effective care and continuity across different settings (hospital and community) for elderly people with health problems or effective strategies to promote healthy lifestyles in childhood and adolescence.

- Qualitative Health Research Network (REDICS)

The Centre is involved in the development of interdisciplinary initiatives regarding Qualitative Health Research. In 2001 the Centre became a coordinating site of the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology. During this year, REDICS (Spanish Qualitative Health Research Network) has established formal links to improve the culture of qualitative research among Spanish health practitioners. Another initiative, to be developed, is the establishment of links with ongoing Ibero-american Qualitative Health Research Programs.

Future and globalisation

The strategic plan for next three years should addressed to the following objectives:

1. To promote dissemination and utilization of research findings and develop evidenced-based and clinical research activities.

   We are convinced that if research is not grounded in practice, we are wasting our time and wasting the money of funding agencies. The divergence between “academic” and “practitioner” nurses is widely acknowledged and strategies must be developed to close this gap. Nevertheless, more of the nurse researchers are not able to practise, and consequently they must develop close working relationships with practitioners to be able to identify practice questions. One of the activities will be the Enfermería Clínica project, that is a Nursing journal that will allow the access to Evidence Based Nursing articles in Spanish.

2. To increase the involvement of nurse leaders (Nurse Directors, Managers, Supervisors).

   In this area, we planned to carry out a survey to all nurse leaders in order to know the resources and the implication of the different organizations in the promotion of nursing research. After we will prepare round table discussions in order to show the obtained results and to establish the appropriate strategies for their improvement.

3. To Recruit and to foster development and training of future nurse researchers.

   We strongly believe that with more nurses prepared as researchers, nursing research should become widespread in the healthcare system. If clinical nurses are involved in research, they can generate research questions directly related to practice, and develop projects that respond to the specific needs of patients and professionals. Some of the initiatives capable of promoting nursing research include an availability of research courses at all levels and the development of research centres at health institutions to lend support to clinicians’ initiatives, and integration of the community, clinicians and researchers in projects.

4. To advance the scientific base of nursing practice through the scholarship of research.
We emphasize that a key issue for preparing young researchers is mobility throughout centres for excellence. Nurses should search for centres of excellence in education or nursing research according to their fields of interest. This mobility depends on different scholarship initiatives. In this area the Institute of Health Carlos III, the University of Toronto and the University of Montreal prepare to intensify the existing cooperative relations between the institutions, especially developing a Graduate Education Collaboration Program. This will allow the nurses to improve their English or French level and to know the state of the art of the Nursing Research in other countries.

5. **Provide opportunities for exchange of research knowledge and experience at European level.**

We are committed to organize a European conference in November. The 6th Nursing Research Congress which will be held this year, at the Carlos III Health Institute in Majadahonda, Madrid, from November 20 to November 23, 2002. This will be the first year that the Congress will go beyond Spanish nursing research, addressing a European audience. The purpose of the Congress is to provide a place where all European professionals who are interested in nursing and health research can come together and meet. This Congress offers the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the results of European studies dealing with the following themes:

1. Nursing care for the elderly
2. Homecare: models and new technologies
4. Care management and integration of primary, secondary and tertiary levels of care
5. Health promotion for infants and adolescents.

6. **Provide opportunities for exchange of research knowledge and experience at European level with focus on approving the guidelines of the VI Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities.**

And promote the European area of research in nursing care.

In the case of European collaboration, language is an important barrier in most countries. Usually, nurses do not read or speak English. Nevertheless, we acknowledged that, now, there is no way to exchange research knowledge and to prepare collaborative projects without the use of English.

---


