A n important part of every research article is the inclusion of nursing implications appropriate for the study conducted. This area is listed in the author guidelines of MEDSURG Nursing for both quantitative and qualitative research. Readers may overlook this area, but it is crucial they review and critique this section of a research report. In addition, potential authors may believe the linkages are obvious between the findings and nursing practice and may be concerned about how to write this section. In this column, I will discuss nursing implications in research and factors to consider when developing nursing implications, and provide recommendations.

Implications

Because nursing is a practice discipline, research is conducted to address issues that directly affect nursing practice, whether in patient care, administration, or education. Nursing implications are the possible clinical consequences or effects of implementing the study’s findings (Polit & Beck, 2014). Research may have varied clinical implications. The nursing implications of research usually are located in a separate section immediately after the discussion or limitations section of a research report. In the discussion section, authors relate the findings of a study to the current research literature (Connelly, 2009). In the nursing implications section, authors interpret the findings for specific nursing practices.

Implications should be realistic, appropriate, and based on the data from the study as well as the literature that preceded this study. They also must consider the scope of nursing practice (Fawcett, 2006). Authors should not assume readers can make the link between specific findings and clinical practice. In addition, clinical interpretation should not be overstated (American Psychological Association [APA], 2009). For example, if results of a study are mixed and unclear, an author should not suggest practice be changed based on this particular study. To identify implications, authors should ask themselves, “Based on the evidence, what should nurses do in daily practice to make patient care better?” In the implications section, authors are answering the “So what?” question that makes research meaningful and therefore practically useful to others (Fawcett, 2006).

Factors to Consider

First, authors should consider the type of patients for whom the findings apply. Are there implications for all patients, or just patients with a specific diagnosis or condition? When writing a manuscript for MEDSURG Nursing, authors should address nursing implications for medical-surgical patients or nurses. In addition, authors should consider the immediate and long-term consequences for patients or nurses applying the change.

In addition, authors should consider the weight of the evidence to date. Is this the first study of its kind, or is there a preponderance of evidence that can direct practice? In addition, the nature of the study will affect its applicability. For example, research that develops a new measure or tests an intervention likely has more immediate potential for changing practice than a descriptive study. However, descriptive study findings that predict clinical outcomes may have implications for assessment or other clinical actions (Drotar, 2009). Another consideration is whether an intervention is invasive. If so, authors need to be particularly careful in advocating for implementation unless multiple studies also support the findings. Do results reinforce good clinical practices that have been used for some time or do they suggest a major change in practice?

Other areas to consider are the precision and magnitude of the findings and how these affect the importance of results for clinical practice. Authors and readers of quantitative research should remember statistical significance does not equate to clinical significance or meaningfulness (Polit & Beck, 2014). Clinical significance requires judgment based on knowledge of clinical practice. In addition, correlation does not prove causation. Therefore, authors and readers of research using correlation statistics should not interpret a correlation between variables as a cause-and-effect relationship. Consideration should be given to limitations of the findings (e.g., sample size) and if no other studies support the findings. Problems remaining unresolved or becoming evident during the study (APA, 2009) also should be considered.

Authors should present the feasibility of using the findings in a particular practice setting (Fawcett, 2006). Are certain resources needed and how can change be facilitated? In this issue, Burchill, Anderson, and O’Connor (2015) use the nursing implications section to address changing practice related to postoperative vital signs from entrenched processes.
Nursing Implications of Research

**Recommendations**

Nursing implications should be relatively short and focused, and include:

1. A clear and concise description of the problem.
2. The appropriate audience (clinical nurse, educator, administrator, advanced practice registered nurse) and the specific patient population affected by the implications.
3. A small number of specific recommendations (including necessary resources) for what readers should or should not do based on the findings; these should be explicit suggestions based on the findings rather than vague advice on the general topic.
4. The expected outcome of carrying out the recommendations.
5. A straightforward style that will be clear to practitioners (Fawcett, 2006; Pasmore, n.d.).

In a recent issue of this journal, Peltzer, Domian, and Teel (2015) offered fairly detailed nursing implications for their qualitative study that are worth reviewing. In the same issue, Meraviglia, Stuifbergen, Morgan, and Parsons (2015) provided an example of nursing implications for a quantitative study; authors were clear about the patient population and teaching recommendations for health-promoting behaviors.

**Critiquing the Implications**

In reviewing the nursing implications of research, readers must consider what the findings mean for their clinical practice. Readers should review the same factors outlined above, but also ask themselves if this applies to their patient population and their patients’ typical preferences. For example, is it appropriate to use research findings with older women in an urban area to address the same issue in middle-aged men in a rural area? In addition, nurses should ask if some implications of the research were not mentioned (Politz & Beck, 2014). Readers need to decide for themselves whether the authors have made leaps in their logic when writing the nursing implications of their research. (Merrill, 2015).

**REFERENCES**


**ADDITIONAL READING**