

Editorial**The Impact of Postgraduate Education in Nursing in Sri Lanka to Improve Clinical Practice; Are We on the Right Track?**

The aim of postgraduate education is to improve clinical practice by integrating advanced research findings into everyday nursing care. However, in Sri Lanka, the direct impact of postgraduate nurses on clinical practice is not very clear. While these nurses possess advanced knowledge and research skills, their influence is often confined to academic and administrative roles rather than bedside care. This detachment can hinder the translation of research into practice, as postgraduate nurses may have limited opportunities to apply their expertise directly in clinical settings. Postgraduates have been instrumental in addressing local healthcare issues through research. The challenge remains in translating these academic achievements into practical improvements in patient care and health policies.

Another aspect that should be particularly considered in this issue is the relevance and the impact of research studies undertaken by postgraduate students in health care. When evaluating whether postgraduate candidates in nursing are selecting research topics that address critical gaps in nursing practice or meet essential needs in improving patient care, it is important to scrutinize both the relevance of their chosen issues and the impact of their findings on clinical practice.

In the context of Sri Lanka, where healthcare systems are burdened by economic instability, shortages in skilled professionals, limited resources, increasing morbidities, drug addiction, identified HIV cases in the young and

high prevalence of mental health issues; the selection of relevant research topics is critically important in ensuring a meaningful impact on patient care.

Ideally, postgraduate candidates are expected to task with selecting research topics that contribute to advancing clinical practice and patient care. This means, theoretically, the research conducted by them should directly address critical gaps in knowledge and practice, helping to solve real-world issues faced by patients and healthcare professionals. However, whether this is happening in practice remains a subject of debate.

In order to truly address these issues or bridge these existing gaps in clinical practice setting, the research topics and studies select by postgraduate candidates should be focused on these burning issues in the Sri Lankan health care system. For examples, research into nurse-led interventions for managing chronic diseases, staffing patterns with skill mix, patient education, patients' and caregiver issues, and studies on cost-effective care delivery models, reducing patient waiting time, innovating in care delivery plans, and improving access for health care etc. would be highly relevant, immediately applicable, and also provide significant benefits to the healthcare system. Research topics that do not address these critical issues or that focus on issues unrelated to the actual clinical challenges faced by patients and healthcare professionals could contribute to the growing disconnect between academia and

clinical practice. This raises concerns about whether the research being conducted is truly filling critical gaps or simply contributing to academic discourse without offering practical solutions.

The research publications on the other hand are another critical aspect that should be considered. Ideally, the research publications in nursing are intended to bridge the gap between theory and practice, providing evidence-based insights that can enhance patient care and clinical outcomes and health related issues in the community. However, the extent to which these publications impact real-world nursing practice remains a subject of debate. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to examine whether and how research publications contribute to improving nursing practice, addressing issues of accessibility, applicability, and implementation.

For research publications to impact practice, they must first be accessible to the relevant audience. However, access to academic journals and databases is often restricted by subscription costs, especially in resource-limited settings. Even when accessible, the utilization of research findings can be hampered by the complex and technical nature of academic writing, which may not be easily understandable for practitioners. Furthermore, the accessibility of some publications based on local studies and the utilization of findings relevant to the general public are often hampered by the writing style and the use of English, making them difficult for many laypeople to understand. If a publication conveys an important message to a general audience, to achieve maximum benefit, these findings should be made available to the public in a local setting, with easy access and in a language that is understandable. Otherwise,

these valuable insights may remain unshared. This disconnect between research accessibility and practical utility suggests that the mere existence of research publications does not guarantee their application in clinical settings.

The relevance and the importance of the messages conveyed by publications to everyday clinical practice is another critical factor. Studies indicate that a significant portion of nursing research is focused on theoretical or highly specialized topics that may not be directly applicable to general nursing practice in many countries around the globe. When research is overly theoretical or disconnected from clinical realities, its potential to effect change is limited. Even when findings are relevant and applicable, the challenges of implementing these findings as conveyed through publications remain a significant barrier in improving clinical practice. This, in turn, undermines the potential impact of postgraduate programs and academic publications. Therefore, executing robust strategies and providing the necessary infrastructure to translate new findings into practice may be the key to improving clinical practice based on scientific evidence.

In Sri Lanka, while postgraduate education in nursing being valuable for academic advancement and policy development in nursing education, does not significantly contribute to improving clinical practice. The relevance of research, challenges in implementation, and the disconnection between academia and clinical settings all undermine the potential impact of postgraduate programs on nursing practice. To bridge this gap, it is essential to align master's and particularly the doctoral research more closely with clinical needs, enhance mechanisms for translating

research into practice, and foster greater integration between academic and clinical roles. Without these changes, the promise of postgraduate education and use of research publications to improve nursing practice in Sri Lanka will remain largely unfulfilled.

In conclusion, this discussion reveals that the

issue at hand is of both global significance and relevance to Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is crucial for academia, particularly those scholars who supervise postgraduate students, as well as clinical leaders, to closely examine the situation in Sri Lanka. Now is the opportune time to address these challenges and work towards meaningful solutions.

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