3.6: Researching the Topic

Many written assignments in your nursing program will require you to research your topic before drafting and writing your paper. Although researching a topic is not the main focus of this book, here are a few ideas related to this stage of your journey to becoming a writer:

- **Consult library resources**—there are many workshops you can participate in and online resources such as research guides, information sheets, and tutorials that you can access on the library website. As an example, check out the Ryerson University library resources: Research help and Research help guide: Find sources or check out your own library research resources.
- **Talk to librarians**—they have a wealth of information about how to research topics. Librarians can teach you how to best use literature search tools such as databases and search engines that organize the information that you will be looking for throughout your nursing program. As part of your post-secondary education, you will have free access to these search engines and many articles and resources.
- **Take a research course** during your post-secondary nursing education that will further expose you to researching your topic.

Think about your research journey as an ongoing and iterative process in which you move back and forth between the stages (see Figure 3.4). You begin by choosing a topic, then brainstorm relevant keywords to search in the databases, and then evaluate your resources. Now, you need to reflect on and develop skills in how to identify keywords and search databases.
Tips to consider as you research

Here are a few tips for you to consider as you are researching a topic, choosing keywords, and searching the various databases:

- Search specific peer-reviewed journals and review the issues and volumes of that journal.
- Become familiar with common databases to search for information related to a topic. In nursing, common databases include CINAHL, Medline, Proquest Nursing, and Evidence Based Medicine (EBM) Reviews. More information can be found at: Top Databases for Nursing.

- Decide on the keywords to search. For example, if you are writing a paper about nursing interventions related to helping patients manage stress, you might search keywords such as “stress management” with a related word such as “coping.” Check out this link and scroll to the bottom of the page about Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) to help you narrow your search to a specific concept. You can also look at the keywords used by the authors in the journal articles that you are reviewing.