1.8: Quality and Evidence-Based Practice

The American Nursing Association (ANA), various professional nursing organizations, and federal agencies continually work to improve the quality of patient care. Nurses must also be individually dedicated to providing quality patient care based on current evidence-based practices.

Quality of Practice

One of the American Nurses Association (ANA) Standards of Professional Practice is “Quality of Practice.” This standard emphasizes that “nursing practice is safe, effective, efficient, equitable, timely, and person-centered.”[1] Quality is defined as, “The degree to which nursing services for healthcare consumers, families, groups, communities, and populations increase the likelihood of desirable outcomes and are consistent with evolving nursing knowledge.”[2] Every nurse is responsible for providing quality care to their patients by following the standards set forth by various organizations, as well as personally incorporating evidence-based practice. Quality is everyone’s responsibility and it takes the entire health care team to ensure that quality care is provided to each and every patient. For example, turning an immobile patient every two hours to prevent pressure injuries requires the dedication of many staff members throughout the day and night. Quality actions can also be formalized on a specific unit, such as the review of data related to patient falls with specific unit-based interventions formally put into place. This commitment to quality practice requires lifelong learning after you have completed your formal nursing education to remain current with new evidence-based practices.

Learning how to provide safe, quality nursing practice begins in nursing school. The Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) project encourages future nurses to continuously improve the quality and safety of the health care systems in which they work. The vision of the QSEN project is to “inspire health care professionals to put quality and safety as core values to guide their work.”[3] Nurses and nursing students are expected to participate in quality
improvement (QI) initiatives by identifying gaps where change is needed and implementing initiatives to resolve these gaps. **Quality improvement** is defined as the combined and unceasing efforts of everyone – health care professionals, patients and their families, researchers, payers, planners, and educators – to make the changes that will lead to optimal patient outcomes (health), improved system performance (care), and enhanced professional development (learning).\(^4\)

As a nursing student, you can immediately begin to contribute to improving the quality of nursing practice by participating in quality improvement initiatives.

**Note**

Read more about the [QSEN project](http://qsen.org/about-qsen/project-overview/).

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**Evidence-Based Practice in Nursing**

**Evidence-based practice** is a component of ANA’s “Scholarly Inquiry” Standard of Professional Practice. Evidence-based practice is defined as, "A lifelong problem-solving approach that integrates the best evidence from well-designed research studies and evidence-based theories; clinical expertise and evidence from assessment of the healthcare consumer’s history and condition, as well as health care resources; and patient, family, group, community, and population preferences and values."\(^5\)

Utilizing evidence-based practice means that nurses and nursing students provide patient care based on research studies and clinical expertise and do not just do something “because that’s the way we’ve always done it.” A simple example of nurses promoting evidence-based practice to help patients is using peppermint to relieve nausea. Throughout history, peppermint was used for an upset stomach and to relieve the feeling of nausea. This idea was frequently rejected in the medical field because there was no scientific evidence to support it. However, In 2016, Lynn Bayne and Helen Hawrylack, two nurse researchers, developed a peppermint inhaler for patients to use when they were feeling nauseated and found it was 93% effective in relieving nausea.\(^6\)

Nursing students should implement evidence-based practice as they begin their nursing career by ensuring the resources they use to prepare for patient care are valid and credible. For this reason, hyperlinks to credible and reliable sources are provided throughout this textbook.

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3. QSEN Institute. (n.d.). *Project overview*. [Link](http://qsen.org/about-qsen/project-overview/)