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Nursing Research Question Objectives and Protocol

Practical 01 / Clinical case or record exercise

Aim

Convert a nursing practice question into a feasible, ethical research proposal.

Principle

A focused question, defined variables and suitable design make a study answerable and reviewable.

Articles and Materials

- Fictional ward problem and protocol template
- Research design notes and ethics checklist

Procedure

1. Describe the nursing issue, setting and evidence gap. Identify the decision that a study could inform and define the population being considered.
2. Write a focused research question and measurable objectives. Define the outcome, key variables and any exposure, intervention or comparison.
3. State a hypothesis if suitable for the design. Clarify the expected relationship and how measurements would support interpretation.
4. Choose an appropriate design, setting, eligible population and proposed sampling method. Explain what the design can assess and its limits.
5. Outline data collection, timing, instrument and analysis. Specify how data quality, missing information and confounding would be considered.
6. Prepare consent, privacy and data handling steps and identify approvals required before any actual recruitment or collection.
7. Review feasibility, timeline, resources and responsibilities with the supervisor. Address one limitation or potential bias before finalising.
8. Present the draft protocol and record feedback, changes and approval status.

Precautions

- Use fictional data for drafting.
- Obtain the required approvals before real data collection.

Observations and Record

Nursing Research Question Objectives and Protocol

Documentation

Item	What to record	Why it matters
Research question	Population, variables and objective	Defines scope
Methods	Design, sampling and analysis plan	Makes the study reviewable
Ethics	Consent, handling and approvals	Protects participants

Worked Example

A proposal about fall prevention narrows its outcome to completion of a defined mobility safety check within one shift.

Result and Evaluation

Produce a feasible proposal with measurable outcomes and a clear approval pathway.

Viva Questions and Answers

What is an operational definition?

A precise statement of how a variable will be measured.

Why consider feasibility early?

It helps match the design, timing and workload to the setting.

Literature Search Annotated Bibliography and Evidence Appraisal

Practical 02 / Lab or data practical

Aim

Find and appraise relevant nursing evidence and produce a concise annotated bibliography.

Principle

A reproducible search, transparent selection and critical appraisal make conclusions easier to verify.

Articles and Materials

- Research question, approved catalogue or database access
- Search log, appraisal form and reference template

Procedure

1. Identify the core concepts and write inclusion criteria for population, context, outcomes, study types and period as appropriate.
2. Develop search terms and synonyms and use the planned databases or sources. Record date, source, key terms and any limits.
3. Screen titles and abstracts against the criteria and select full texts. Record reasons for excluding borderline or duplicate items.
4. Extract citation, purpose, design, participants, methods and findings into an evidence table. Check details from the primary paper.
5. Appraise bias, measurement, applicability and limitations with the assigned tool. Explain which evidence is most relevant to the question.
6. Write a short annotation for each selected item that describes the study, main finding and a useful limitation.
7. Summarise agreements, differences and remaining gaps and link the review to the proposed question.
8. Verify reference details and findability and retain the search and screening record for review.

Precautions

- Paraphrase accurately and credit sources in the project.
- Apply inclusion criteria consistently.

Observations and Record

Literature Search Annotated Bibliography and Evidence Appraisal

Documentation

Item	What to record	Why it matters
Search	Terms, sources, dates and limits	Supports reproducibility
Evidence	Design, findings and quality	Supports comparison
Synthesis	Agreement, gap and applicability	Guides research

Worked Example

Two studies use different definitions of a successful handover. The learner records the difference before comparing their conclusions.

Result and Evaluation

Produce a traceable search and annotated evidence summary with thoughtful appraisal.

Viva Questions and Answers

Why record exclusions?

It helps others understand selection and possible bias.

What belongs in an annotation?

The citation and a concise summary and appraisal linked to the question.

Sampling Tool Development and Pilot Data Collection

Practical 03 / Lab or data practical

Aim

Select a suitable sample, prepare a data tool and test it on a fictional pilot.

Principle

Defined variables, consistent instruments and documented pilot changes support reliable data and ethical collection.

Articles and Materials

- Fictional sampling frame and variable list
- Draft questionnaire or observation form and pilot guide

Procedure

1. Define target and accessible populations, inclusion and exclusion criteria and sampling unit. Verify what the supplied sampling frame represents.
2. Select the appropriate sample method for the question and note likely selection bias. Use the approved basis for size estimation.
3. Turn each objective into a measurable field. Define response categories, units, permitted values and missing-value codes.

Continue with step 4 on the next page.

Procedure Continued

Sampling Tool Development and Pilot Data Collection

4. Write or adapt the instrument and provide standard instructions. Check language, clarity, content and permission for a borrowed instrument.
5. Pilot the instrument on approved mock cases and record completion time, misunderstood items, missing data and observer disagreements.
6. Revise the fields and instructions and document what changed and why. Test a corrected portion and confirm past data handling.
7. Prepare a coded data-entry and quality plan, including checks, confidentiality and approval status before any live project.
8. Submit the tested instrument, data dictionary, sampling plan and pilot summary for supervisor approval.

Precautions

- Use approved data and supervision.
- Keep pilot changes and document versions traceable.

Observations and Record

Sampling Tool Development and Pilot Data Collection

Documentation

Item	What to record	Why it matters
Sampling	Population, method and eligibility	Determines scope
Tool	Variables, coding and instructions	Improves consistency
Pilot	Issues, revision and retest	Improves quality

Worked Example

Two observers mark the same patient-assistance level differently. The group adds examples and repeats the mock observation.

Result and Evaluation

Deliver a tested tool and traceable, ethical sampling plan.

Viva Questions and Answers

Why pilot a tool?

It reveals unclear questions, practical barriers and inconsistent measurement.

Why define a missing code?

It distinguishes an unavailable value from a genuine observation.

Data Tabulation Statistics and Nursing Project Presentation

Practical 04 / Lab or data practical

Aim

Organise a training dataset, calculate suitable summaries and present justified results.

Principle

Accurate coding, correct denominators and clear descriptions are essential to interpretation and reporting.

Articles and Materials

- Synthetic project dataset and codebook
- Calculator or spreadsheet, chart and report templates

Procedure

1. Create an analysis copy and verify identifiers, data definitions, units and missing codes. Check range, duplicates and inconsistent entries.
2. Document corrections and decisions about incomplete rows. Separate the original record from the analysed dataset and retain a reproducible log.
3. Identify categorical and numeric variables and select appropriate summaries. Review the distribution before choosing mean and spread or median and interquartile range.
4. Build tables with labelled groups, denominators and valid counts. Calculate relevant percentages or rates and independently check selected results.
5. Use an appropriate graph with units, sensible scales and readable labels. State whether missing values affected the plotted totals.
6. If the project calls for a comparison, select the analysis with the supervisor and verify the design and assumptions before interpretation.
7. Write results with time, units and uncertainty, then discuss limits and practical implications without making unsupported causal claims.
8. Prepare a brief project presentation and obtain review of tables, figures, results and confidentiality.

Precautions

- Use authorised or synthetic data.
- Distinguish descriptive findings from causal conclusions.

Observations and Record

Data Tabulation Statistics and Nursing Project Presentation

Documentation

Item	What to record	Why it matters
Quality	Codes, corrections and missingness	Supports reproducibility
Results	Summary, denominator and plot	Matches data type
Interpretation	Limitations and implications	Supports valid reporting

Worked Example

The project calculates 18 completed reviews among 24 eligible cases. The report gives 75% and states why two other records were not eligible.

Result and Evaluation

Present an accurate and reproducible analysis with clear limits and an accessible project summary.

Viva Questions and Answers

Why report the denominator with a percentage?

It identifies the base and magnitude of the result.

Which summary may suit skewed numeric data?

Median and interquartile range can describe the centre and spread.

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