



Expanding Nursing Research Capacity: Strategic Priorities and Roadmaps for Nurse Leaders

Prepared by: Institute for Nursing Research and Quality Management
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Executive Summary

As the complexity of healthcare delivery evolves, nurse leaders are uniquely positioned to drive research that enhances patient outcomes, improves workforce well-being, and informs evidence-based policy. [The 2025 research priorities outlined by the ANE Research Advisory Council](#) provide a blueprint for expanding nursing research capacity across accreditation, certification, education, and practice domains. This white paper summarizes these strategic priorities and offers practical recommendations for nurse leaders to build and sustain robust research infrastructures within their organizations.

Why Now: The Case for Expanding Nursing Research Capacity

Healthcare systems are under increasing pressure to demonstrate the value of nursing. From burnout to retention, care quality to cost-effectiveness, nurse-led research is essential to answering system-level questions. Yet many organizations lack the infrastructure, expertise, or strategic alignment to fully leverage research as a vehicle for transformation.

Nurse leaders must champion research not as a stand-alone activity, but as a core strategy for workforce development, innovation, and measurable impact.

Nursing Strategic Research Priorities by Organizational Competencies

1. Nurse Well-being and Workforce Retention

- Study nurse well-being, job satisfaction, burnout, and intent to leave
- Standardize well-being metrics across settings and roles
- Investigate workforce retention by education level (e.g., BSN vs. ADN)
- Explore the professional identity and belonging of APRNs
- Assess organizational strategies (e.g., flexible scheduling, reporting systems) that support well-being

2. Research Capacity and Infrastructure

- Promote multi-site and longitudinal nursing research
- Launch “Virtual Research Seats” to expand access to internal data
- Create a Certification Research Working Group with defined multi-year objectives
- Expand use of large datasets (e.g., Magnet, Pathway, CMS, Certification) for secondary analysis
- Encourage international research and culturally relevant model comparisons

Source: ANCC Departments conversation with the Research Advisory Council during the 2025 Research Council Spring Retreat
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3. Education, Practice Readiness, and Professional Development

- Advance simulation-based education in transition programs and residencies
- Explore AI integration in professional development with a focus on human-centered care
- Promote leadership development and personalized learning pathways
- Strengthen return on investment (ROI) and return on engagement (ROE) metrics in continuing education
- Evaluate care delivery models for alignment with future practice needs

4. Practice Environments and Organizational Culture

- Examine key elements of the practice environment that influence nurse satisfaction and retention
- Evaluate the impact of continuing education and transition programs on practice culture
- Promote strategies that support psychologically safe, collaborative, and high-performing work environments
- Use validated tools (e.g., PES-NWI) to assess and improve organizational climate

5. Certification and Credentialing Impact

- Evaluate the role of certification in nurse retention, team performance, and patient outcomes
- Analyze market dynamics and emerging certification trends
- Streamline certification processes to reduce administrative burden
- Conduct value-of-certification studies using outcome and cost data

Cross-Cutting Themes for 2025

Theme	Key Shifts in 2025
Nurse Well-being	Expanded focus on structural interventions (e.g., burnout detection, flexible scheduling)
Workforce Development	Greater emphasis on leadership pathways and multipath entry
Retention	More nuanced analysis by degree, role, and identity
Practice Environment	Integrated tools and metrics across education, simulation, and credentialing
Certification Value	Shift from perception-based to measurable outcomes
Simulation & AI	Ethical application of AI and broader integration in residency programs
International Collaboration	Emphasis on culturally relevant models and global research partnerships
Data Infrastructure	Expanded access to de-identified data and secondary datasets for multi-site analysis

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Recommendations for Nurse Leaders

1. **Align Local Priorities with National Research Agendas**
Review the outlined ANE research priorities and assess alignment with your organization's mission, accreditation status, and strategic goals.
2. **Invest in Research Infrastructure**
Establish internal review processes, grant support services, and virtual access to national datasets (e.g., Magnet, Pathway, Certification).
3. **Create Multi-Site Collaboration Structures**
Partner with peer organizations to co-lead studies, increase generalizability, and share resources. Start small—2-site collaborations are a valuable entry point.
4. **Build Research Capacity in Practice Settings**
Engage clinical nurses in research design and data collection. Offer protected time, mentoring, and continuing education on research methods.
5. **Use Research to Demonstrate ROI and Value**
Prioritize studies that tie nursing actions to measurable clinical, financial, and workforce outcomes. These findings support budget requests and policy changes.
6. **Champion Certification and Educational Research**
Support projects that assess the impact of advanced certification and continuing education on nurse retention and patient outcomes.
7. **Promote Equity, Belonging, and Innovation**
Incorporate inclusive and equitable research methodologies that reflect the diverse experiences of nurses and patients. Embrace simulation and AI while prioritizing human-centered, compassionate design.

Call to Action

Nursing research must be continuous, collaborative, and outcome-focused. As nurse leaders, you have a critical role in ensuring your organization is not only participating in, but leading, the transformation of health care through research.

Let's unlock the full potential of nursing science—together.

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