Nurses often cringe at the notion and the mere mention of nursing research. The term *research* is often associated with complex statistical analysis and reports of complex findings that seem more relevant to laboratory scientists then nurses at the bedside. However, research can truly enhance your nursing practice, and hopefully become a friend rather than an enemy.

Nurses need to develop the habit of integrating evidence-based practice into their daily work with patients, both at the bedside and in other patient care settings. The key to incorporating evidence-based practice is to be able to discern which evidence or studies are valid, reliable, and credible to use in changing practice. *Evidence-based practice* can be defined as the use of reliable research to guide patient care. One of the challenges of evidence-based practice is determining if a research study was conducted in such a way that the study results can be generalized to all patients.

Credible research starts with the applicability of the study findings. For example, a study done with oncology patients regarding their levels of pain may not be applicable to a study done with chronic back pain patients. The type of pain experienced by chronic back pain sufferers may be different from the pain of cancer patients experiencing metastasis; therefore, pain relief measures would need to be different. Another mark of credibility is if the study is peer-reviewed. *Peer-reviewed* refers to the analysis of the study’s methodology and results by experts in the field, for validity and reliability. Often, peer-reviewed research is published in various nursing journals, such as *Nursing Research*. It is these peer-reviewed journals that make up the body of scholarly research work. By using strong evidence that has been peer-reviewed, nurses are demonstrating evidence-based practice and true patient advocacy. A large part of patient advocacy is helping to contain the cost of care, where possible.

Nurses need to use evidence in their nursing practice to help demonstrate cost effectiveness. For example, if a particular supply costs more to purchase, hospital administrators will resist the purchase of the supply to save money. However, if this supply of a particular central line dressing change kit reduces central line infections and septicemia, then the long-term benefits could outweigh the costs. Often, it is the nurses and their observations of lowered infection rates in central line patients that can sway administration to spend the extra money for the higher priced supply to reduce long-term costs associated with the increased infection rates. The cost savings of reduced complications affects not only the hospital, but also health insurance companies that must ultimately pay for any complications related to low-quality patient care associated with inferior supplies. Nurses are large consumers of research. Examples of nurses as consumers of research are the following:

- Involvement in a journal club, where a group of nurses meet on a regular basis to discuss journal articles from scholarly sources and the
applicability of the research to their practice
- Going to educational conferences where research is presented
- Including research results when doing patient teaching
- Providing patients with information about enrolling in available studies

Nurses may also play a pivotal role in producing research. Producing nursing research is an important aspect of helping the discipline of nursing continue to solidify the profession as its own, true scientific discipline. For example, nurses participate as producers of research whenever they engage in quality assurance or quality improvement activities. Nurses are helping to produce research when they distribute and collect patient satisfaction surveys. Another example of nurses producing research is the collecting of data from research participants (patients) who are already enrolled in a study. Integrating research and practice happens more frequently than many nurses realize. Nurses are producers of research, especially in the process of data collection.