

TRISERVICE NURSING RESEARCH PROGRAM
Strategic Refinement Conference
August 21–22, 2002
Lansdowne Conference Center, Leesburg, VA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The TriService Nursing Research Program (TSNRP) Strategic Refinement Conference was attended by nurse researchers, policy makers, clinicians, and research consultants from each service, the TSNRP Advisory Council, and the TSNRP director and staff. A facilitator guided the group's discussions. The aims of the conference were twofold: 1) to obtain participants' perspective on current research issues and concerns and 2) to refine TSNRP's strategic plan, based on current research issues.

Four overarching questions provided the foundation for discussions over the two days:

1. What progress has TSNRP made since the last strategic meeting in January 2001?
2. How has military nursing research (MNR) changed since the January 2001 meeting?
3. What three issues or concerns in MNR would you consider to be the most important today?
4. What would the participants like to accomplish at this Strategic Refinement Conference?

In the more than 18 months since goals and specific strategies were first established, TSNRP has **remained on target and made great progress toward its goals**. The trajectory and quality of TSNRP funded research has been facilitated through TSNRP's active discourse with investigators and diligent monitoring of research progress. The application review process, both scientific and programmatic, has been strengthened, which is resulting in higher quality research protocols. Open communication and collaboration between and among TSNRP, military nurse researchers, and the Nurse Corps leadership is resulting in a greater appreciation for, and utilization of, the research process.

Many **opportunities within each service to enhance military nursing research** were identified during the two-day conference: recruiting and retaining military nurses through active participation in research and utilization; tapping into the large pool of Nurse Corps reservists; inclusion of medical facilities other than Medical Centers for research activities; moving toward utilization of research findings and evidenced-based practice; "real time"/field research; and active mentoring of novice investigators. Some concern was raised about career opportunities for military nurse researchers who desire to remain in research positions.

- ❑ Participants agreed that **military nursing research is becoming more militarily relevant and operational** in nature, although there is a need for more focus on military *unique* issues. It was noted that military nurse researchers are not assigned at troop sites where issues can be identified; Nurse Corps officers are also needed in Research & Development shops. Additionally:
- ❑ Active involvement of the nursing leadership verifies that research is a valid part of nursing practice;
- ❑ Nursing practice has become more evidence-driven than ever before;
- ❑ Collaboration is occurring between services, experienced and novice researchers, civilian and military, and across disciplines, with more partnering between the reserve, active, and retired components;
- ❑ Growing interest among junior officers to participate in research.

From large and small group discussions, five initiatives were identified as areas in which to concentrate military nursing research activities:

- ❑ **Strong, Formal Marketing Campaign** - Marketing research findings is crucial for military nursing, and for the Program's success and continuation. Military nurse researchers, military nursing leadership, and TSNRP must actively market the Program and its accomplishments in order to attract

junior officers/novice researchers, to impact nursing practice through dissemination of research findings, and to sustain funding.

- ❑ **Mentoring Novice Researchers**– There is a need for mentorship for novice researchers and mentor training for seasoned researchers; a new funding award category was felt by conference participants to be a likely way to accomplish this. The new award category would fund a *focused* plan for mentoring a novice researcher, with *defined outcomes* for the mentoring process.
- ❑ **Small Studies** – Participants identified these short, small-in-scope studies as important tie -ins to Program marketing as they would likely be in response to Corps Chiefs’ specific questions or concerns, and produce findings that could be rapidly disseminated back to the military nursing community and Congress as well. This type of grant would receive an expedited review and likely have a low funding cap owing to the grant’s short life cycle. Although there was a high level of interest in developing a funding category of this type, the practicality of this type of grant needs further exploration before it could be approved.
- ❑ **“Grab and Go” operational research** – Conference participants expressed a desire to capitalize on the current political/military climate by rapidly implementing military-unique research during deployments. Research protocols would be written, reviewed, funded, and shelved until deployment opportunities arose. At that time, investigators would be deployed along with the unit(s) and the protocol implemented at the deployment site; raw data would be immediately available. Many programmatic concerns were raised for this “grab-and-go” type of research, however a model for rapid response research currently exists within the Public Health Service. Although great enthusiasm was expressed for the idea, it requires further exploration and was not deemed feasible at present due in part to the Program’s funding cycle and other administrative issues.
- ❑ **Deployment-Specific Research Priority** – The five current TSNRP research priorities were retained, Deployment Health, Developing and Sustaining Competencies, Recruitment And Retention of the Work Force, Clinical Resource Management, and Military Clinical Practice and Outcomes Management. Participants agreed that deployment and combat care issues should be areas of focused research in the future, and several suggestions for gathering deployment-type topics were put forth.
 - **Proposal: Nursing Questionnaire** - capitalize on the opportunity to survey recently deployed individuals at the upcoming Association of Military Surgeons of the United States (AMSUS) meeting by enclosing a simple questionnaire in reserve nurses’ registration packets.
 - **Proposal: Focus Group** - formerly deployed Nurse Corps officers could be organized into a focus group that would be held during the AMSUS meeting.
 - **Proposal: After Action Reports** - these post deployment reports contain a wealth of information that could be used in developing military nursing research questions. Access to these reports needs to be established and routine monitoring of the reports should be initiated.
 - **Proposal: Corps Chiefs’ Feedback** - the nursing leadership of each service will be asked to identify nursing issues for which they would like/need data. Input related to deployment and combat care will also be solicited from Navy nurse researchers in the field.

Data obtained through these four methods will be incorporated into future Calls for Proposals.

POSTSCRIPT

Two new funding categories, “*Research Fellow Award*” and “*Fast Track Award*” were created in November 2002 and announced in the TSNRP FY03-B Call for Proposals. The “*Research Fellow Award*” is a grant to facilitate the training of military nurses interested in research, and expand the skills of experienced military nurse researchers. The “*Fast Track Award*” facilitates the rapid implementation of short-term research of emerging service-specific questions or concerns.

Conference participants indicated this type of forum is vital to developing and building collaboration among and between TSNRP nurse researchers, nurse clinicians, and policy makers. This type of forum is also essential to in synchronizing TSNRP’s goals and strategies with the needs of both military nurse researchers and the three services; therefore a similar strategy meeting is planned for early 2004.