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Discipline Awareness Paper (DAP)

The field of nursing is vast and comprises many different specific career opportunities and specialties. Career opportunities range from entry-level registered nurse (RN) positions to doctoral-level positions. Additionally, there is an abundance of specialties related to the age of a patient, a particular region or organ of the body, and the location of employment. For example, perinatal nurses assist pregnant women and teach them good pre-natal health. Nephrology nurses treat patients with kidney diseases or abnormal kidney function. Correctional facility nurses care for a broad range of patients in prisons, jails, and juvenile detention centers. Although there are many different types of nursing, they all share the same values of improving patient care and overall health. The role of a nurse is to provide hands-on, personalized health care. The goal of every nurse is to promote a healthy lifestyle and help patients cope with illnesses. In order to do this, they collaborate with other health care professionals and advocate for their patients and patients’ families.

One key professional organization in the field of general nursing is the American Nursing Association (ANA). The ANA focuses their research and discussion on health care reform, safety, and ethics. One of their more popular publications, *American Nurse Today*, seems to be a promising source for my research. A majority of the articles published by this journal are written for the general nursing field and focus on holistically improving patient care using new techniques and technology. However, there are a few articles that are more closely related to my topic of congenital heart defects (CHDs) and patient care for infants. The ANA also reports on some major hot topic issues in the nursing community like safety on the job. With influenza spreading so rampantly this winter, many nurses are working towards preventing it from spreading especially in medical workplaces. Another hot topic is safe staff levels. Low or unsuitable RN staff to patient ratios can be a danger to patient health and safety. If there are not enough RN’s on the floor, this can cause fatigue for existing nurses and increase the risk of injury or complications.

Similar to how nursing has detailed specialties, there are also specialty related sources and professional organizations. The Academy of Neonatal Nursing (ANN) is an organization that works towards educating health care professionals and furthering neonatal research projects. Resources are focused on improving neonatal nursing and assisting with issues like CHDs which affect neonates (newborn infants) at a higher rate. The ANN has many publications and has a journal, *The Journal of Neonatal Nursing*. Another professional organization is The American Heart Association (AHA). The AHA has done extensive research on congenital heart defects (CHDs) and continually publishes new statistics and reports.

In addition to professional organizations, there are a few nursing databases that appear promising such as *The Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL)* and *Medline*. So far, both databases have been excellent sources of information. They provide an assortment of scholarly journal articles, book excerpts, essays, experimental reports, and statistical data. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any databases which are exclusively for CHDs, neonatal nursing, or pediatric nursing.

Alongside these statistics and reports found in the databases, there are various other research methods used by nurses such as experimental studies, observational studies, statistical or quantitative research, case studies, and content analysis. An example of an experimental study is the article “Leveraging Technology to Improve Care and Patient Outcomes” by Lori Erikson, Cheri Hunt, and Paula Blizzard published in the peer-reviewed *American Nurse Today* journal. In this article, the authors conducted a minor experiment to see the effectiveness of their Cardiac High-Acuity Monitoring Program (CHAMP) for patients with single ventricle cardiac defects which is a type of CHD. The main advantage of an experimental study is the raw data that is provided as a result. Additionally, if done correctly, experimental studies allow one to draw conclusions and make cause-and-effect statements. Another article, “Congenital Heart Disease and Its Effects on Children and Their Families” by Mark Smith, incorporates two types of research methods, observational study and content analysis. Smith explains his personal experiences and observations which he has accumulated through working in a hospital and interacting with patients. Then he includes some information about multiple congenital heart defects from research he has completed.

Academic genres used in nursing are also numerous. One example of a genre used in the field of nursing is a literature review. A literature review is an evaluation of information found in existing works used to answer a specific question or address a research topic. It is often used as a preliminary step to actual research so the author can gain a clear understanding of what has already been found versus what still needs to be discovered. Literature reviews provide an extensive amount of information. For my research, I must complete a literature review to fully understand what patient care looks like for CHD patients aging from neonates to young children. Although I am still in the beginning of this process, I have learned so much about the various roles of a nurse and their effects on patients. I have found that because a majority of CHD patients are neonates and cannot advocate for themselves, their families must take on this role. Nurses should support their families and be sure that their physiological, mental, and emotional needs are provided for as well. For nurses who work with infant CHD patients, care does not end with the patient; it is extended to families, friends, and all those who support the patient.