Nursing

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Author Note

Nursing

Nursing practice today is based on a thoughtful and judicious application of various inferences and insights drawn from a broad range of fields which include biological, physical, and behavioral sciences, alongside humanities and arts. The interrelationship between the theories and research from these various fields, and how they relate to nursing practice would be further explored in the paper.

To understand the relationship between research and theory requires an initial insight into what theory is. A common definition of theory is that it is an explanation of an observed regularity or pattern, for which the reason and the cause require to be comprehended. It provides a hypothesis or an idea about the external world, through a set of ideas which can provide a fair degree of prediction about it (Pryjmachuk, 1996). On the other hand, research refers to a systemic and diligent inquiry to refine or validate existing knowledge or to develop it. It increases the sum of the body of knowledge by means of discovery of new relationships or facts by engaging in a systematic form of scientific inquiry, otherwise known as the research process. This process consists of identifying the research question, collecting and then analyzing data, and then publishing its findings (Parahoo, 2014).

To understand the interrelationship between research and theory is a complex matter, yet highly essential to formulate a rationale or a framework for the research to be conducted. Consequently, creating new knowledge or validating existing knowledge would require some a priori assumptions to be accepted about the topic or area chosen for investigation. The tested and accepted theories about a certain functional field serve as the foundation upon which knowledge is built and serve as given constraints upon which research is conducted, and its findings interpreted (Benoliel, 2012).

The relationship of theory to practice is a substantive matter to understand, yet the various forms of practice, such as formal or informal, underscores the context of that relationship. The public or collective actions within a particular discipline constitute formal practice in it, while the day-to-day actions associated with that discipline refer to informal practice. Disciplines such as healthcare and nursing rely upon an established body of scientific knowledge to guide its practice by developing practical applications for that knowledge. The theories of scientists, therefore, dictate the practice when science is applied. Hence according to Pryjmachuk (1996), the relationship between practice and theory exists in a certain unidirectional nature.

In the field of nursing, the relationship between practice and theory conventionally comprises three elements. The element of theory is contained within various activities or textbooks related to a nurse’s formal education. Subsequently, practice is associated with the day-to-day actions and work of nurses who deliver care to their patients, while another element is the variance between the first two elements. According to Gallagher (2007), this element is also known as the gap between practice and theory. Conceptually, practice and theory have different locations because learning practice and learning theories correspond to different resources and physical locations. Theories are generally related to teaching, classrooms, and instructors, while practice is what nurses perform in their delivery of care (Gallagher, 2007).

Pryjmachuk (1996) suggests that the link between practice and theory is research since research plays a major role in both informal and formal knowledge refining, testing, and acquisition. The act of acquiring, testing, and refining becomes the link between applying and formulating because the process of learning does not occur without research. Thus, research underscores the link between practice and theory and serves as the key to further developing a discipline. Thus, research carried out both at an informal and formal level will directly affect practice.

# References

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