

# Abstract Development:

*How to write an abstract*  
*Fall 2017*

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\*Slides developed with Carolyn Paul formerly of the MGH Treadwell Library



Oh No! I need to write an abstract!



How do I start?

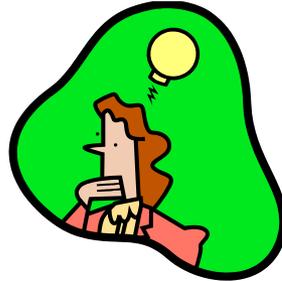
# *Why is it hard to write an abstract?*

- Fear / anxiety
  - about the writing process
  - others reading what you wrote
- Takes time / feel overwhelmed
- Commits you to analyzing your project and doing a poster
- Not sure what to include



*remember ...*

*you had an idea ...*



you did a project you thought important ...

*you need to share it*

*to benefit others & yourself!*



There is support:

*this class, mentors, CNS, Munn Center*

## *Today's goals:*

- Describe what a structured abstract is and relevant headings
- Review content for each part of the abstract
- Understand guidelines for writing an abstract
- Practice by critiquing some abstracts

You will be more prepared to write an abstract!

**Abstract:** a short, informative summary of your completed research / project

Each journal/group has its own requirements.

**Structured**

**abstract:** started in the 1980's

uses specific headings for each section

Abstract formats continue to evolve: video abstracts

# Structured Abstract examples:

paragraph at the beginning of the journal article

## Journal Club Feature

### VISITING PREFERENCES OF PATIENTS IN THE INTENSIVE CARE UNIT AND IN A COMPLEX CARE MEDICAL UNIT

By Colleen E. Gonzalez, RN, MSN, Diane L. Carroll, RN, PhD, Jeanne S. Elliott, RN, Patricia A. Fitzgerald, RN, MSN, and Heather J. Vallent, RN. From Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, Mass.

- **BACKGROUND** Within the challenging healthcare environment are nurses, patients, and patients' families. Families want proximity to their loved ones, but the benefits of such proximity depend on patients' conditions and family-patient dynamics.
- **OBJECTIVES** To describe patients' preferences for family visiting in an intensive care unit and a complex care medical unit.
- **METHODS** Sixty-two patients participated in a structured interview that assessed patients' preferences for visiting, stressors and benefits of visiting, and patients' perceived satisfaction with hospital guidelines for visiting.
- **RESULTS** Patients in both units rated visiting as a nonstressful experience because visitors offered moderate levels of reassurance, comfort, and calming. Patients in the intensive care unit worried more about their families than did patients in the complex care medical unit but valued the fact that visitors could interpret information for the patients while providing information to assist the nurse in understanding the patients. Patients in the intensive care unit were more satisfied with visiting practices than were patients in the complex care medical unit, although both groups preferred visits of 35 to 55 minutes, 3 to 4 times a day, and with usually no more than 3 visitors.
- **CONCLUSIONS** These data provide the input of patients in the ongoing discussion of visiting practices in both intensive care units and complex care medical units. Patients were very satisfied with a visiting guideline that is flexible enough to meet their needs and those of their family members. (*American Journal of Critical Care*. 2004;13:194-198)

Advances in science and technology have made nursing practice in acute care settings highly complex, rapid, and demanding. Within this challenging healthcare environment are patients and their families. We know that families want proximity to and information about their loved ones, but the benefits of having a patient's family members present during the patient's hospitalization can depend on the patient's condition and the family-patient dynamics.<sup>1,2</sup>

As knowledge of environments that support family-centered care has evolved, changes have been made in visiting practices for pediatrics and obstetrics. Con-

versely, adult care units, both general care and intensive care units, have been slow to change their family visiting practices.<sup>1,3</sup> Nurses often think they must control visits by patients' families and others to protect what the nurses perceive to be the best interests of the patients, although nurses can identify the beneficial effects of visiting both for patients and patients' families.<sup>1,4</sup> Current nursing literature clearly indicates that family visiting practices in acute care settings still vary widely and that debates continue in many areas of care.

*Nurses can identify the benefits of visiting, both for patients and for patients' families.*

To purchase reprints, contact The Journal Group, 101 Columbia, Aliso Viejo, CA 92656. Phone, (800) 800-2273 or (949) 362-2850 (ext 532); fax, (949) 362-2040; e-mail, reprints@jgaa.com.

# Summary on online search engines

Ethical dilemmas among nurses as they transition to hospital case management.

Authors:

[O'Donnell LT](#)

Source:

[Professional Case Management](#) (PROF CASE MANAGE), 2007 Jul-Aug; 12 (4): 219-31.  
(9 ref)

Abstract:

**PURPOSE OF STUDY:** The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of ethical concerns by clinical nurses as they transitioned into their new role in hospital case management. Through this study, an attempt was made to explore experiences of ethical concerns and identify the implications for organizational ethics. **PRIMARY PRACTICE SETTING(S):** In this study, nurse case managers practicing in the acute care setting, military, not-for-profit community, and teaching hospitals were interviewed. The majority of the nurse case manager participants were engaged in hospital discharge planning and utilization review activities. **METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE:** An interpretive phenomenological approach was used to identify the themes inherent in ethical concerns and articulate them within the context of hospital nurse case management. Fifteen participants were interviewed to obtain a qualitative description of the nurse case managers' lived experiences of ethical dilemmas and how they were resolved. Ethical dilemmas among nurses as they transition to hospital case management.

# Present in Abstract Books

**Title:** A Study Examining Why Students Choose Nursing

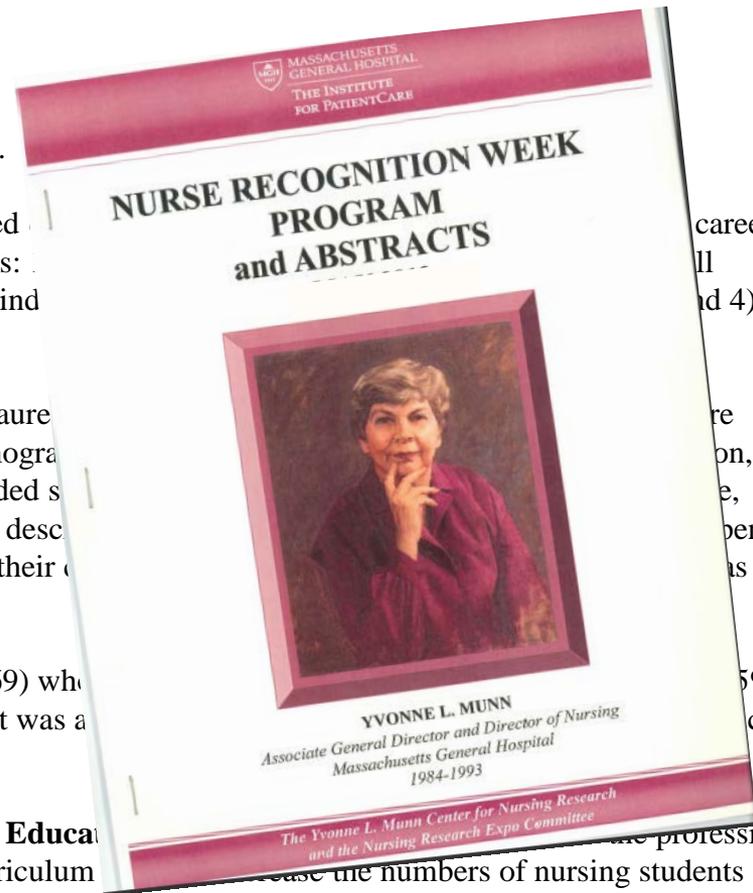
**Purpose of the study:** To explore why students chose nursing.

**Background/Significance:** Numerous studies have been carried out. Generally four significant themes emerge from previous studies: 1) and/or hospitalized, 2) past work experience in the health care industry, and 3) financial gain/job security.

**Method/Design:** A convenience sample of 129 generic Baccalaureate students surveyed using a quantitative questionnaire that examined demographic information and previously held perceptions of nursing. Respondents included students who had not chosen nursing as a career choice. Students rated their top 3 choices based on a total of 12 themes described in the questionnaire. Open-ended questions asked students to describe the reasons behind their career choice.

**Findings:** The primary reason for the student respondents (n =69) who chose nursing as a career choice was that it was a stable career. The second most common reason for choosing nursing is that it was a profession that provided a sense of purpose and meaning. 23.8% of direct entry students that were queried.

**Implications for Nursing Practice, Research, Policy, and/or Education:** The findings of this study will guide nurse educators in developing a student focused curriculum and future registered nurses. This allows students to adjust to the ever-increasing demands of today's healthcare system. Additionally, our study results would be beneficial in the recruitment and retention of nurses through improved selection of nursing student candidates based on their perceptions of nursing.



# What's the Reader looking for?

- Does it look interesting?
- Do I have time to read it?
- Can I understand what was done?
- Can I do this in my unit?

*All incentives for writing a great abstract !*



# Abstract categories: Which to use?

Original Research  
Evidence-Based Practice  
Quality Improvement

# Abstract Categories:

## Based on purpose and method:

- Original Research: to generate **new knowledge** within the **broader scientific community** ... generalizable beyond the study sample.
- Evidenced-Based Practice: to evaluate evidence along a **continuum** to identify the strongest or **best evidence** to guide nursing practice within an organizational setting and with a specific patient population
- Quality Improvement: to **improve internal processes and practices** within a specific patient group or organization.

# Standard headings help to:

- Cover key points in research process
- Organize information in a consistent format
- Make it easier to read/scan/skip to decide if the reader wants to read on

# Structured Abstract Headings

## Original Research and Evidence-Based Practice

- Background / Significance
- Purpose of Study
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions
- Implications for Nursing Practice and/or Future Research

## Quality Improvement

- Background / Significance
- Objectives
- Implementation
- Performance Improvement Outcome
- Implications for Nursing Practice and/or Future Research

# Important

- Abstract headings are not “one size fits all” and may vary by meeting/organization/journal.
- Always make sure to review the abstract headings required by the conference or meeting you are submitting your abstract too.
- Always make sure the content of your abstract reflects what is requested in the structured abstract heading.

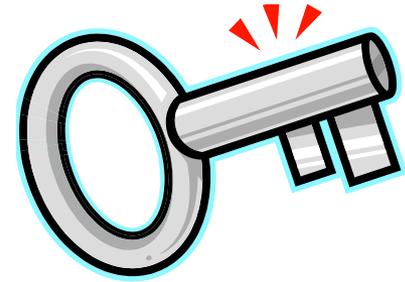
Parts of the Abstract:  
What goes where?



## Today:

- Describe what is included
- Identify questions to ask
- Review examples
- At the end, discuss ways to say it better

# Abstract Title is Key



- Describes your research
  - Topic
  - Type of study
  - Population or Study subjects
  - Results
- Sometimes writing it afterwards is best
- *Does it attract attention and encourage reader to read more?*
  - *When listed in the table of contents or when walking by at a poster session?*
- *Does it reflect the content?*
  - *Is it too broad i.e. "Diabetes Treatment"*

# Title Example - Informative

**Topic**

**Setting**

**Fall Prevention in Hospitals:**

Impact of Fall TIPS Toolkit on Documentation Quality

**Tool**

**Outcome measure**

# Background / Significance

2-4 sentences

- Describes key issues/problems
- Briefly reviews what has been written
  - Library will help you do this search
- *Why is it an important / interesting issue?*
- *What gap in knowledge are you filling?*
- *What are you doing that is different?*

# Background/Significance Example

**Problem**

Sleep disturbance has been correlated with a decrease in the immune function, changes in mental status, and increased stress levels. Negative effects on the immune system, functional status and stress levels may aggravate the healing process for adults requiring acute care in a hospital setting. Further research is required to understand better how environmental modifications and nursing interventions may effectively support sleep for patients in acute care settings.

**Why it's important**

**Setting**

**Need for info**

# Purpose of Study / Objectives

1-2 sentences

- Research question or hypothesis
- Brief statement of goal(s)
- *What did you hope to find/solve?*
- *Why did you start?*

# Purpose / Objectives Example

**Purpose  
Statement**

The purpose of this pilot study is to determine if clinical research subjects who receive additional education regarding potential side effects of medication will be more likely to report these side effects.

**Intervention**

**Impact**

# Methods / Implementation

2-4 sentences

- Describes design of the study
  - Design, RCT, focus group, case study, questionnaire
  - Population, subject, sample, setting
  - Interventions, procedures, or protocols
  - Statistics used
- *What important variables did you control, ignore, or measure?*
- *How did you do it? RECIPE!*

# Methods / Implementation Example

Method of collection

This qualitative study used open-ended questions related to sleep and sleep disturbance. A convenience sample of patients who had spent three consecutive nights on a general medical unit, a surgical unit or a cardiac access unit were interviewed. Structured interviews were audio-taped and transcribed.

Selection criteria

Members of the research team analyzed the transcripts using content analysis to identify critical themes. These findings were shared with unit-based nursing staff for content validity.

Data analysis

# Results / Outcome

2-5 sentences

- Main focus of your abstract
- Relate back to the purpose of the study
- Findings:
  - Qualitative/quantitative data and analysis
  - Statistics
  - *“10% of the Nurses were satisfied” How many is 10%?  
Include the study “n”*
- *What did you find?*
- *What is the significance of results?*

# Results Example

Following initiation of keratin gel dressings during post-op week three, wound surface area (WSA) decreased 23-25% during each of the next four weeks of treatment. When the solid keratin dressing was added to the regimen, the weekly decrease in WSA accelerated from 35% to 56% with final closure in two weeks or a total of nine weeks after starting keratin therapy. A scheduled skin graft with donor site was averted, saving substantial cost for surgery and hospitalization. Patient satisfaction was exceptionally high.

**Impact of interventions**

**Meaning of results**

# Conclusions

1-2 sentences

- Summary statement of research
- Interpret findings
- Emphasizes significance of the study
- *What did your project show?*
- *What do you want readers to remember?*

# Conclusions Example

The use of a fall prevention tool kit in hospital units compared with usual care significantly reduced the rate of falls.



**Simple final statement**

# Implications for nursing practice and/or future research

1-2 sentences

- Impacts nursing, research, policy
  - Patient outcome, efficiency, morale, etc.
- *How will the results be used in practice?*
- *Are the results general or specific to a particular case?*

# Implications for nursing practice and/or future research Example

Implications for nursing practice include reductions in patient wait time, enhancement of patient flow through the MGH system, improved patient safety, and empowerment of the nurse.

Patient

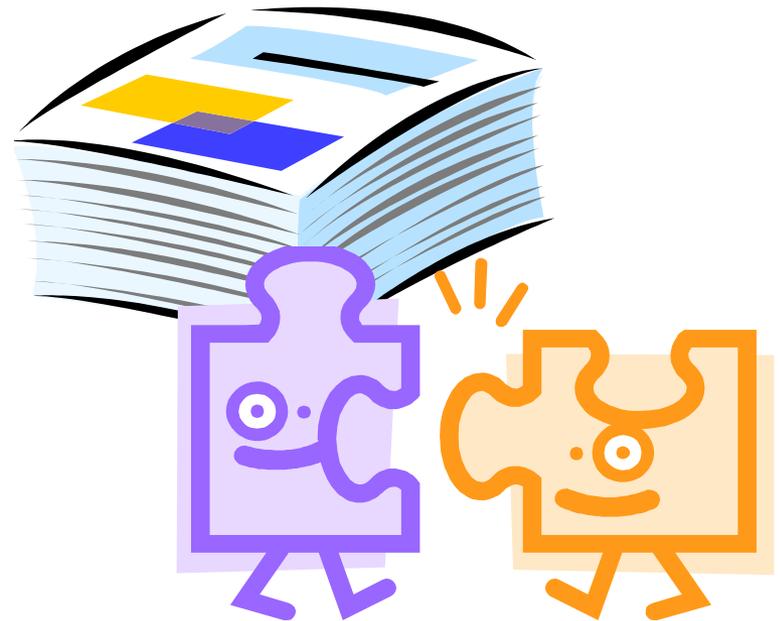
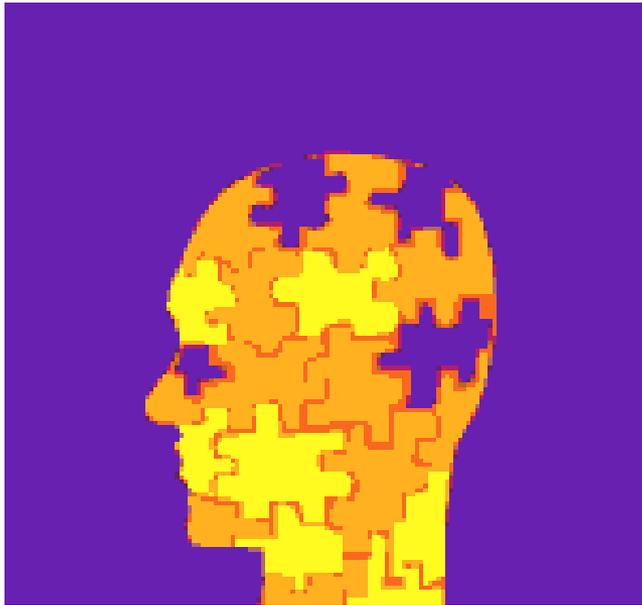
System

Staff

What are helpful  
guidelines for abstract  
writing?



Starting early helps you find missing information  
and gives you time to find the answer



# Writing Guidelines

- Use section headings to organize ideas
- Pick your words
  - detailed yet concise (300 word limit)
  - enthusiastic, powerful, strong words
- Gear your abstract to your audience
  - scholarly yet easily understood
- Re-read and revise – *grammar & spelling count!*

# Grammar Do's and Don'ts

## Yes

- ✓ Use active voice
- ✓ Use third person
- ✓ Be specific
- ✓ Be clear
- ✓ Smooth flow of sentences
- ✓ Full sentences not always required

## Do not use

- x Passive voice
- x 'We' or 'I'
- x Acronyms or abbreviations  
-- unless well-known  
or explained

# Length Guidelines

Title	title / subtitle
Background / Significance	2-4 sentences
Purpose of Study / Objectives	1-2 sentences
Methods / Implementation	2-4 sentences
Results / Outcome	2-5 sentences
Conclusions	1-2 sentences
Implications for nursing practice and/or future research	<u>1-2 sentences</u>
Total: 300 words	

# Abstract Summary Tips

- Reduce / Refine
  - Remove redundancy and unnecessary detail
  - Use meaningful, powerful, dynamic words
  - Stay within the 300 word limit
- Review
  - Emphasize major ideas and key messages
  - Use the section headings
- Re-read
  - Leave enough time to proofread
  - Get all authors to read and edit
  - Re-write - clear, concise, easy to understand

## *Team Effort!*

All contributing authors should contribute, read/edit the abstract.



# Abstract vs. Poster

## Similarities

- Basic message is same
- Structured headings



## Differences

- Abstract = compact
- Poster = visual & more detailed  
includes charts, graphs,  
pictures, references



# Abstract = Poster

- Make sure your abstract content is in concert with your poster content:
  - Language
  - Results
  - Conclusions

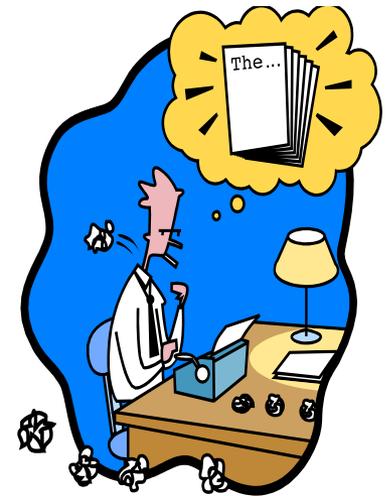
Any questions before  
we go on to the  
practice exercise ?



# Practice exercise

Learn to write by evaluating existing abstracts in journals, online, abstract books from meetings

- Critique and revision is ok - expected
- even the experts do it
  - professional development



*Disclaimer: Suggested edits are subjective and fictitious* 😊

Title: Changing 1 word gives more info / power

Fall Prevention in Hospitals:

**Impact of** Fall TIPS Toolkit on Documentation Quality

Fall Prevention in Hospitals:

Fall TIPS Toolkit **Improves** Documentation Quality

## Background: Drop unneeded / repetitive words & Use simpler words

68 words

Sleep disturbance has been correlated with a decrease in ~~the~~ immune function, changes in mental status, and increased stress levels. ~~Negative effects on the immune system, functional status and stress levels~~ may aggravate the healing process for adults ~~requiring acute care in a hospital setting~~. Further research is required to understand better how environmental ~~modifications~~ and nursing interventions ~~may effectively~~ support sleep for patients ~~in acute care settings~~.

51 words

Sleep disturbance has been correlated with a decrease in immune function, changes in mental status, and increased stress levels. These effects may aggravate the healing process for adults in acute care hospital settings. Further research is required to understand better how environmental changes and nursing interventions support sleep for these patients.

17 words saved – to use in other ways + easier to read

## Purpose: Simpler phrase / word

Purpose: ~~The purpose of this pilot study is to test~~ the hypothesis that clinical research subjects who receive additional education **regarding** potential side effects of medication will be more likely to report these side effects.

Purpose: **This pilot study tested** the hypothesis that clinical research subjects who receive additional education **on** potential side effects of medication will be more likely to report these side effects.

5 words less – stronger, easier to read, not always major edit

# Methods: Add more detail by deleting 12 words & adding 12

## 70 words

This qualitative study used open-ended questions related to sleep and sleep disturbance. A convenience sample of patients who had spent three consecutive nights on a general medical ~~unit~~, a surgical ~~unit~~ or a cardiac access unit were interviewed. Structured interviews were audio-taped and transcribed.

~~Members of~~ the research team ~~analyzed the transcripts~~ using content analysis to identify critical themes. ~~These findings~~ were shared with ~~unit-based~~, nursing staff for content validity.

## 70 words

This qualitative study used 9 open-ended questions related to sleep and sleep disturbance. A convenience sample of 55 adult patients (29 male, 26 female) who had spent three consecutive nights on a general medical, surgical, or cardiac access unit were interviewed over 3 month time period. Structured interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Using content analysis, the research team identified critical themes that were shared with nursing staff for content validity.

# Results: Percentages & Statistics

Following initiation of keratin gel dressings during post-op week three, wound surface area (WSA) decreased 23-25% during each of the next four weeks of treatment. When the solid keratin dressing was added to the regimen, the weekly decrease in WSA accelerated from 35% to 56% with final closure in two weeks or a total of nine weeks after starting keratin therapy. A scheduled skin graft with donor site was averted, saving substantial cost for surgery and hospitalization. Patient satisfaction was exceptionally high.

Would be nice to add statistical significance of percentage changes

Also nice to compare LOS without keratin therapy – but this may require different kind of study or collection of data that is hard to get.

# More Reading

Bingham, R., & O'Neal, D. (2013). Developing Great Abstracts and Posters. *Nursing For Women's Health*, 17(2), 131-138. doi:10.1111/1751-486X.12021. Discusses both abstract and poster.

<https://phstwlp2.partners.org:2443/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ccm&AN=2012079778&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Bliss, D. (2012). Writing a successful research abstract. *Journal Of Wound, Ostomy & Continence Nursing*, 39(3), 244-247.

<https://phstwlp2.partners.org:2443/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ccm&AN=2011617157&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Russell, C. L., & Ponferrada, L. (2012). How to Develop an Outstanding Conference Research Abstract. *Nephrology Nursing Journal*, 39(4), 307-311, 342.

<https://phstwlp2.partners.org:2443/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ccm&AN=2011656388&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Writing competitive scientific and clinical abstracts: tips for success. (2013). *Canadian Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing*, 23(1), 19-20.

<https://phstwlp2.partners.org:2443/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ccm&AN=2012356858&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

# Munn Center Website

<http://www.mghpcs.org/MunnCenter/>

- Overview of Nursing Research Day
- Information for Authors
  - Abstract requirements
  - Categories
  - IRB approval
- Abstract Development
- How to submit your abstract



# YVONNE L. MUNN CENTER FOR NURSING RESEARCH

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**Center for Innovation in Care Delivery**

**Consultation** >

**Doctoral Forum** >

**Nursing Research Day**

**Munn Center** Nursing Research Day

**Research Awards**

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**Faculty Appointments and Student Research** >

**Staff Perceptions (RPPE)** >

**News and Events**

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The Yvonne L. Munn Center for Nursing Research at the Massachusetts General Hospital provides an infrastructure that promotes innovation and mobilization of resources, both funding and development, to support research initiatives that advance clinical practice and optimize quality patient-centered outcomes. The Munn Center, housed within the Institute for Patient Care, was inspired by the vision and dedication of Yvonne L. Munn, RN, MSN, a nurse leader at MGH from 1984-1993, and her desire to advance nursing research at MGH. The official dedication of the Munn Center in May, 2008 acknowledged the hospital's commitment to nursing and interdisciplinary research collaborations that foster high quality, cost-effective, patient-family centric care.

**Goals of the Center**

- Accelerate research in core areas of focus: care of the elderly, ethics, symptom management, workforce evaluation, and innovations to enhance healing and recovery.
- Facilitate the development, use, and translation of evidence into practice.
- Support the establishment, implementation and evaluation of interventions that promote changes in care
- Develop strategies to support a research agenda for all nurses in Patient Care Services (PCS).
- Identify centers within the Institute for Patient Care to advance the strategic mission of PCS.
- Explore opportunities and funding mechanisms within MGH and with external funding sources.

**Research Areas of Interest**

Complementary Therapies	Ethics and Clinical Decision Making
Geriatrics and Care of the Elderly	Innovation Science
Quality and Safety of Care Delivery	Symptom Management
Transitional Care	Workforce Evaluation

**Methods**

Electronic Medical Record Evaluation	Instrument Development and Evaluation
Qualitative Methodology	Quantitative Methodology
Systematic Reviews	

**2016 Nursing Research Day Abstract Book**

***THANK YOU!***