Conduct Literature Search and Review

Contributors
Sonia A. Duffy, PhD, RN
Lisa Kane Low, PhD, CNM, FACNM
Huey-Ming Tzeng, PhD, RN
What is a Literature Review?

- An extensive examination of research sources to generate a picture of...
- What is known and not known about a clinical problem to determine if the knowledge is ready for use in practice
Purpose of the Literature Review (1)

- Clarify the research problem
- Verify the significance of the research problem
- Specify the purpose of the study

- Identify relevant studies and theories
- Develop a research framework
- Clarify objectives, research questions, or research hypotheses
Purposes of the Literature Review (2)

- Develop definitions of major variables
- Identify limitations and assumptions
- Select a research design

- Identify methods of measurement
- Direct data collection and analysis
- Interpret findings
Critiquing the Literature Review

- Are relevant studies identified and described?
- Are the studies critiqued by the researcher?
- Are the references current?
- Is a summary of current knowledge provided?

- Also see the assignment guideline, entitled “Major content sections of a research report and related critiquing guidelines”
Information Required within Seconds

- Systematic reviews, periodically updated, of randomized trials of the effects of health care
  - From all sources, in all languages
  - The Cochrane Collaboration: www.cochrane.org
Review the Following Terms

- What is conceptual literature?
- What is data based/empirical literature?
- What are the differences between primary and secondary literature?
- What are the advantages of each of these four types of literature?
Conceptual Literature

- Literature that deals with ideas and topics from a theoretical or personal point of view
- Not include research studies or other data based literature

- The advantages of conceptual literature include:
  - A perspective that may be personal or subjective to an expert or one that provides an overview of a large amount of knowledge
  - Sometimes this may be all we know, i.e., there is no empirical literature on a topic
Data Based/Empirical Literature

- In this type of writing, we see work that has gone through a formal process of research or scientific analysis.
- There is DATA that is used to demonstrate a point.
- An advantage would be that there is an OBJECTIVITY not found in conceptual literature.
- One must be careful, after all, researchers are human and are certainly capable of skewing data!
Primary Literature

- This is literature where the author is the actual developer of the material
  - Example: Jean Watson’s writing about how the theory of caring can be applied to CHF clients
  - Example: Jones’ reporting on the results of her study on outcomes

- In this case the work is FRESH from the horse’s mouth, so to speak. The primary advantage of primary literature!
Secondary Literature

- The author presents the work of another, such as a theory or a study
  - Example: The writer writes an article about how he or she used Jean Watson’s theory of caring or how his or her students like that work
  - Example: The writer summarizes the literature in a particular area from, such as, a review of the literature on pain treatment
Summary of ‘Review the Important Terms’

- A good literature review for a research study takes all these types into consideration
- There should be a preponderance of primary data based literature
- Secondary and conceptual literature may round out the review but should NOT be the dominant forms
- The only exception would be if there is NO data based literature
Apply What You Know...

- The next slide has a variety of citations from the literature
- Review these one by one, and write down on a piece of paper whether they are
  - Primary versus secondary sources
  - Conceptual versus data based
- On the following slide you will find the answers
Primary or Secondary?  
Conceptual or Data Based?

Check Your Answers Here...

- # 1 is primary, conceptual
- # 2 is primary, data based
- # 3 is primary, data based
- # 4 is primary, conceptual
- # 5 is primary, conceptual
- # 6 is secondary and probably considered as data based, although it includes both conceptual literature and empirical data
- # 7 is primary, data based
Notes

• Unless the author indicates it’s someone else’s work in the title, you may not be aware of secondary literature until you read the article

• It is important to get the primary study whenever possible