

Nursing and research: FAPESP theme project

Nursing has increased its participation in the scientific community through the coordination of scientific projects funded by different funding agencies, involving the development of research personnel.

Before the 1990s, nursing research was performed through isolated efforts, without communication and articulation among researchers. The view that “efforts should be united, research groups should be created to develop specific projects so as to avoid performing isolated research”⁽¹⁾ started to gain forces in 1993, with the establishment of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) Research Group Directory. As from the year 2000, the group projects concept becomes broader and, thus, integrated CNPq projects as well as theme projects of The State of São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP) in Nursing gain strength.

In this same period, the culture of evaluating higher education is implemented, exerting an impact on research. Researchers are classified according to their CNPq level; periodicals are classified by the “Qualis” ranking, which is defined by CAPES (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel) in each field by the committee that evaluates graduate (Post-Graduation) programs. The internationalization of knowledge production is encouraged through strategies like researcher exchange programs (national and international) and, between 2001 and 2006, there is a 54% increase in nursing scientific publications in Brazil⁽²⁾.

Starting in the year 2000, nursing expands its participation in mobilizing projects, developing theme projects funded by FAPESP. The action line of these projects is the development and promotion of joint actions among scientists⁽³⁾.

In 2003, the Interinstitutional Tuberculosis Research Group/CNPq, led by nursing and medical researchers, submitted a FAPESP theme project, involving a team of 20 health researchers from different university institutions across Brazil.

The theme project mode aims to obtain a set of conceptually consistent outcomes about a certain research theme, involving diverse methodological approaches, with well-defined objectives, to reach scientific or technological and socioeconomic results of greater impact. The project structure is based on a partnership among research teams from various university institutions, and can involve different knowledge areas allied to an academic base, considering that performing research requires interfaces with professionals, researchers and students involved in this theme.

In this sense, the experience of creating a theme project under nursing leadership involves integration/articulation among different actors (researchers, administrators, and health professionals), knowledge (epidemiologic and clinical), professionals (medicine, nursing, statistician, etc.) and locations (priority cities for Tuberculosis in Brazil).

The project submission phase provides new knowledge to each researcher in the group. It involves suggestions proposed by the scientific director, based on FAPESP *Ad-hoc* referees’ reports. These theoretical-methodological suggestions refer to objectives and stages outlined in the project development timetable.

After approval, a systematic yearly follow-up of each stage is performed through scientific reports that present the progress of knowledge construction, the difficulties experienced, as well as the financial report based on the approved budget.

The theme project development phases and the required articulations picture the need for nursing to organize the group research work, search for new partnerships, and articulate with researchers from other knowledge areas and university institutions.

This support mode, besides funding research development, offers complementary benefits to coordinators and gives researchers the opportunity of technical visits and participation in exchange programs, scientific

meetings, and both national and international events.

Theme projects allow for innovations in the research administration process regarding the integration of sub-projects linked to graduate (post-graduation) programs, either well-established or under creation. This occurs through exchange among researchers working in similar areas, and by jointly advising scientific initiation, master's, doctoral and post-doctoral students. Students receive counseling from faculty affiliated with different programs but involved in the same projects, so as to increase the efficiency level of the system for training research personnel.

Nursing's participation in the coordination of Theme Projects⁽⁴⁾ has broadened the opportunity for nursing researchers to develop collaborative research, at both national and international levels. In addition, it makes it possible for them to participate in exchange programs and scientific events, which increase the visibility of publications through public and academic debates on research issues. Moreover, they provide the opportunity to propose new nursing intervention strategies in health services, as well as to establish partnerships, group actions, and to take on new challenges and forms of expanding the scale of work, articulating local, regional, national and international levels.

Broadening nursing research has been successful through the coordination of an operational tuberculosis research area in the Brazilian TB Research Network (REDE-TB www.redetb.usp.br), since 2002. The REDE-TB has supported collaborative projects on tuberculosis with over 40 nurses from different university institutions in Brazil. These projects have been receiving funds in the following modes: FAPESP theme, Universal/ CNPq, Neglected Diseases/ CNPq, Public Policies /PPSUS-FAPESP, among other induced demand calls for applications⁽⁵⁾.

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