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**Practice**

## The Impact of Evidence-Based Practice in Nursing and the Next Big Ideas

[Kathleen R. Stevens, EdD, RN, ANEF, FA](#)

### Abstract

The impact of evidence-based practice (EBP) has echoed across education, and science. The call for evidence-based quality in healthcare transformation underscores the need for redesigning safe, and efficient. In line with multiple direction-setting recommendations from national experts, nurses have responded to launch initiatives that valuable contributions that nurses have made, can make, and deliver on the promise of EBP. Such initiatives include practice and curricular realignment; model and theory development; and the new fields of research; and development of a national research improvement. This article briefly describes the [EBP movement](#), the impact of EBP on [nursing practice](#), [models and framework research](#). The article concludes with discussion of the [next big two federal initiatives](#), and considers [opportunities and challenges](#) to support other exciting new thinking in healthcare.

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Over the past decade, nurses have been part of a movement that reflects any two decades combined. Directions in nursing education in the 1960s established nursing as an applied science. This was the entry of our profession into the age of knowledge. Only in the mid-1990s did it become clear that producing new knowledge was not

enough. To affect better patient outcomes, new knowledge must be transformed into clinically useful forms, effectively implemented across the entire care team within a systems context, and measured in terms of meaningful impact on performance and health outcomes. The recently-articulated vision for the future of nursing in the *Future of Nursing* report (IOM, 2011a) focuses on the convergence of knowledge, quality, and new functions in nursing. The recommendation that nurses lead interprofessional teams in improving delivery systems and care brings to the fore the necessity for new competencies, beyond evidence-based practice (EBP), that are requisite as nurses transform healthcare. These competencies focus on utilizing knowledge in clinical decision making and producing research evidence on interventions that promote uptake and use by providers.

This discussion highlights some of the responses and initiatives that have taken to maximize the valuable contributions that nurses have made to deliver on the promise of EBP. A number of selected influences of evidence on nursing and nursing care quality are explored as well as thoughts about moving nursing and healthcare forward.

## The EBP Movement

EBP is aimed at hardwiring current knowledge into common care decisions

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Evidence-based practice holds great promise for...producing the intended health outcome.

and patient outcomes. Following the identification of deficits in healthcare caused significant problems (IOM, 2000) a blueprint for healthcare reform in the first *Quality Chasm* report (IOM, 2001) from the nation's experts was to eliminate the chasm between what we know and what was practiced was to be cross-implement best practices.

Evidence-based practice holds great promise for a high level of likelihood for producing the intended health outcome. The definition of healthcare quality (Box 1) is foundational to the EBP movement.

### Box 1. Definition of Quality Healthcare

***Definition of Quality Healthcare***

*Degree to which health services for individuals and populations include targeted health outcomes and are consistent with current professional knowledge*

The phrases in this definition bring into focus three aspects of *quality*: targeted health outcomes, and consistency with current knowledge (reflecting an underlying belief that research produces the most reliable knowledge) and that a given strategy will change a patient's current health status into desired health status. Ensuring that health services with current professional knowledge (evidence) is a key goal in the EBP movement. It calls into play the aim of reducing illogical variation in care by standardizing care based on evidence.

The EBP movement began with the characterization of the problem—

what we know and what we do in the care of patients ([IOM, 2001](#)). In the *Chasm* ([IOM, 2001](#)), IOM experts issued the statement that still drives initiatives: “Between the health care we have and the care we could have, there is a chasm” ([IOM, 2001](#), p. 1) and urged all health professions to join effort

A major part of the proposed solution to cross this chasm was “evidence-based practice.” Experts continue to generate direction-setting IOM *Chasm* reports ([IOM, 2003](#); [IOM, 2008a](#); [IOM, 2008b](#); [IOM, 2011a](#)); each report consistently identifies evidence-based practice (EBP) as *crucial* in closing the quality chasm. The intended effect of EBP is to standardize healthcare practices to science and best evidence and to reduce illogical variation in care, which is known to produce unpredictable health outcomes. Development of evidence-based practice is fueled by the increasing public and professional demand for accountability in safety and quality improvement in health care.

Leaders in the field have defined EBP as “Integration of best research evidence with clinical expertise and patient values” (Sackett et al, 2000, p. ii). Therefore, EBP unifies research evidence with clinical expertise and encourages individualization of care preferences. While this early definition of EBP has been paraphrased, the original version remains most useful and is easily applied in nursing, as well as with the broader field of EBP. The elements in the definition emphasize rigorous and systematic inquiry; the experience of the clinician; and the goal of providing an enduring and encompassing definition of EBP.

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The entry of EBP onto the healthcare improvement scene constituted a major paradigm shift.

The EBP process has been highly applied research efforts previously used in nursing. This characteristic of EBP includes the research-to-practice effort, including systematic reviews, new roles (knowledge transformers), new teams (interprofessional upper-management), new practice settings, and healthcare learning organizations that build the “evidence on evidence-based practice” ([Grimshaw, 2005](#)). The entry of EBP

into the healthcare improvement scene constituted a major paradigm shift. This shift was a change in the way nurses began to think about research results, the way nurses framed the content of their work, and the way nurses employed change to transform healthcare.

## Impact on Nursing Practice

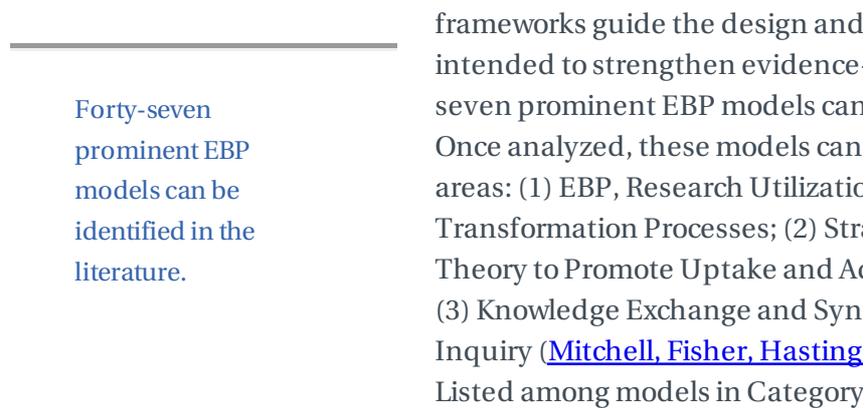
In this wide-ranging effort, another significant player was added...the Magnet Model, which was successfully adopted and sustained, nurses and other healthcare professionals must be adopted by individual care providers, microsystem and system leaders, and system makers. Federal, state, local, and other regulatory and recognition activities support adoption. For example, through the Magnet Recognition Program<sup>®</sup> the American Nurses Credentialing Center is a leader in catalyzing adoption of EBP and using it as a marker of excellence.

In spite of many significant advances, nurses still have more to do to achieve EBP across the board. A recent survey of the state of EBP in nurses indicated that, while nurses had positive attitudes toward EBP and wished to gain more knowledge and skills, they still faced significant barriers in employing it in practice (Melnyk, Fineout-Overholt, Gallagher-Ford, & Kaplan, 2012). One example

of implementation of EBP points to the challenges of change. The evidence-based program, Team Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety (TeamSTEPPS®) ([AHRO, 2008](#)) carries with it proven effectiveness of reducing patient safety issues and the program is available with highly-developed training and learning materials. Yet, because of the change necessary to fully implement and sustain the program across the system supported by organizational culture, a sophisticated implementation plan is required before the evidence-based intervention is adopted across an institution. While agency policy may be set, implementation and sustainment of TeamSTEPPS® remain

## Impact on Nursing Models and Frameworks

Early in the EBP movement, nurse scientists developed models to organize a number of EBP models were developed by nurses to understand various

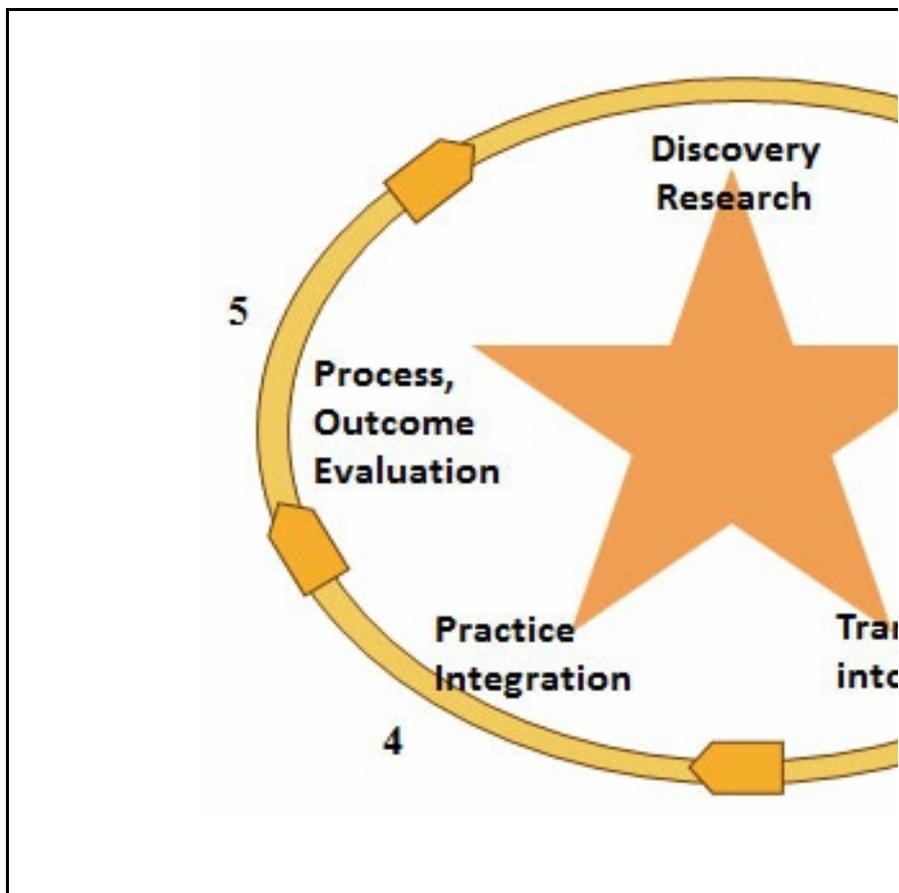


Knowledge Transformation ([Stevens, 2004](#)); this model is the exemplar of the impact of EBP on nursing models and frameworks.

The ACE Star Model of Knowledge Transformation ([Stevens, 2004](#)) was a comprehensive approach to translate evidence into practice. As explained, an approach to understanding the use of EBP in nursing is to consider the knowledge transformation necessary for utility and relevance in clinical practice. Having clinicians submersed in the volume of research reports, a more efficient way for a clinician to access a summary of all that is known on the topic. Likewise, for nursing providers to master the technical expertise needed in scientific critique, the process would be better supported by evidence-based recommendations in the form of clinical guidelines.

The ACE Star Model of Knowledge Transformation highlights barriers to translating evidence into practice and designates solutions grounded in EBP. The model's stages of knowledge transformation reduce the *volume* of scientific literature to knowledge that can be directly incorporated in care and decision making. The model emphasizes crucial steps to convert one form of knowledge to the next: Point 1 Evidence, representing primary research studies; Point 2 Evidence Summary, where available knowledge compiled into a single harmonious statement, such as a guideline; Point 3 Translation into action, often referred to as evidence-based clinical practice; Point 4 Evidence-in-action, in which practice is aligned to reflect best evidence; and Point 5 Satisfaction, an inclusive view of the impact that the evidence-based practice has on patient satisfaction; efficacy and efficiency of care; and health policy.

**Figure 1. ACE Star Model of Knowledge Transformation**



Copyright [Stevens 2004](#). Reproduced with permission.

Quality improvement of healthcare processes and outcomes is the goal. The importance of Point 2 and Point 3 forms of knowledge has been underscored by several recent reports on the role of systematic reviews ([IOM, 2008a](#); [IOM, 2008b](#); [IOM, 2011b](#)) and clinical practice guidelines ([IOM, 2008a](#); [IOM, 2008b](#), [IOM, 2011c](#)) in "knowing what works in healthcare." As an important new form of knowledge, systematic reviews are characterized as the central link between research and clinical decision making (IOM, 2008). Likewise, the function of clinical practice guidelines is to guide practice (IOM, 2008). Important new knowledge resources have been developed and advanced owing to the EBP movement. While resources were available for Point 1, only recently have resources been developed for Point 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the Model. These resources

Table 1. Resources for Forms of Knowledge in the Star Model.	
Form of Knowledge	Description
Point 1-Discovery	Bibliographic Databases provide single research reports and multiple reports.
Point 2-Evidence Summary	Cochrane Collaboration Systematic Reviews

	rigorous systematic See <a href="http://www.cochrane.org">www.cochrane.org</a>
Point 3-Translation into Guidelines	National Guideline by AHRQ, provides based clinical practice <a href="http://www.guideline.gov">www.guideline.gov</a>
Point 4-Integration into Practice	AHRQ Health Care sponsored by AHRQ innovations, and to processes, including information to contact <a href="http://innovations.aahrq.gov">http://innovations.aahrq.gov</a>
Point 5-Evaluation of Process and Outcome	National Quality Measurement sponsored by AHRQ information on quality sets. See <a href="http://www.qualityindicators.aahrq.gov">http://www.qualityindicators.aahrq.gov</a>

## Impact on Nursing Education

Following the influential *Crossing the Quality Chasm* report ([IOM, 2001](#)), the preparation of health professionals was crucial to bridging the quality chasm. The *Professions Education* report ([IOM, 2003](#)) declared that current education does not adequately prepare nurses, physicians, pharmacists or other health professionals to deliver the highest quality and safest health care possible. The conclusion was that health professions were in need of “a major overhaul” to prepare health professionals for new roles ([IOM, 2003](#)). This overhaul would require changing the way that health professionals are educated, in both academic and practice settings. Programs for basic health professionals were to undergo curriculum revision in order to focus on evidence-based practice and improvement processes. Also, professional development programs were to be made available to update skills of those professionals who were already in practice. Health professions disciplines were urged to come together in an effort for clinical education. The report identified core competencies essential in bridging the quality chasm: All health professionals are to be educated to deliver patient-centered care as members of an interdisciplinary team; to practice evidence-based practice, quality improvement approaches, and informatics. Table 4 presents details of each competency.

**Table 4. Core Competencies for Health Professions**

1. **Provide patient-centered care** - identify, respect, and care for individual differences, values, preferences, and expressed needs; recognize

coordinate continuous care; listen to, clearly inform, communicate with patients; share decision making and management; and coordinate disease prevention, wellness, and promotion of healthy living on population health.

2. **Work in interdisciplinary teams** - cooperate, collaborate, and integrate care in teams to ensure that care is continuous and coordinated.
3. **Employ evidence-based practice** - integrate best research evidence with patient values for optimum care, and participate in learning to the extent feasible.
4. **Apply quality improvement** - identify errors and hazards and implement basic safety design principles, such as standardization and simplification; continually understand and measure quality structure, process, and outcomes in relation to patient and system design and test interventions to change processes and systems with the objective of improving quality.
5. **Utilize informatics** - communicate, manage knowledge, and support decision making using information technology.

From: [IOM Health Professions Education, 2003](#), p. 4.

From this core set, IOM urged each profession to develop details and synthesize new competencies into education. With a focus on employing evidence-based practice, IOM established a national consensus on competencies for EBP in nursing in 2009 ([Stevens, 2009](#)). The ACE Star Model served as a framework for identifying and to employing EBP in a clinical role. Through multiple iterations, an expert panel developed and endorsed competency statements to guide education programs at the undergraduate, intermediate (masters), and doctoral (advanced) levels. 32 specific competencies are enumerated for each of four levels of nursing published in *Essential Competencies for EBP in Nursing* ([Stevens, 2009](#)) including fundamental skills of knowledge management, accountability for science, organizational and policy change; and development of scientific understanding ([2009](#)).

A measurement instrument was developed from these competencies, the Inventory (ACE-ERI). The ACE-ERI quantifies the individual's confidence in performing the competencies. The ACE-ERI exhibits strong psychometric properties (reliability and sensitivity) and is widely used in clinical and education settings to assess confidence in employing EBP and measuring impact of professional development programs ([2012](#)). The ACE Star Model, competencies, and ERI have been adopted by many programs to strategize to employ EBP. These resources have also been incorporated into many programs that are revised to include EBP skills.

Curricular efforts were also underway. To stimulate curricular reform and ensure that the five core competencies were reflected in education, IOM suggested that oversight processes (such as accreditation) be used to ensure that the five core competencies. Initiatives that followed included the new program of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, crossing undergraduate and graduate education ([AACN, 2013](#)). The AACN standards underscored the need for new systems of care as well on the evidence for clinical decisions. This system reflects the changes that are part of employing EBP.

Another curricular initiative became known as Quality and Safety Education (QSEN) ([QSEN Institute, 2013](#)). Through multiple phases, this project was established as a central repository of information on core QSEN competencies, knowledge, and skills.

teaching strategies, and faculty development resources designed to p quality and safety.

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Educating nurses in EBP competencies was catapulted forward with the publication of *Teaching IOM*.

Educating nurses in EBP compete with the publication of *Teaching IOM*. While the materials presented were professional literature, the book was synthesizing what was known into a form that was accessible to every faculty member. The book's strategies and learning resources were integrated into curricula across the country. The book's competencies into curricula across the country continues to be updated and expanded. The book's editions and versions ([Finkleman, 2010](#)) strength of these resources is that

remain closely aligned with the Institute of Medicine's continuing professional development. This close alignment reflects the appreciation that nursing must be prepared for the desired changes; and remaining in the mainstream with other health care providers splintering into discipline-centric paradigms.

### **Impact on Nursing Research**

Nursing research has been impacted by recent far-reaching changes in the healthcare research enterprise. Never before in healthcare history has the focus and formalization of moving evidence-into-practice been as sharp as is seen in today's research on healthcare transformation efforts. Nascent fields are emerging to understand how to increase effectiveness, efficiency, safety, and timeliness of healthcare; how to improve health service delivery systems; and how to spur performance improvement. These emerging fields include translational and implementation science, implementation research, and health delivery systems science.

Investigation into uptake of evidence-based practice is one of the fields that has deeply affected the paradigm shift and is woven into each of the other fields. Investigation into EBP uptake is equivalent to investigating Star Point 4 (integration of EBP into practice). Several notable federal grant programs have evolved to foster research that produces the evidential foundation for effective science. Among the new research initiatives are the Clinical Translational Science Centered Outcomes grants.

#### ***Clinical and Translational Science Awards***

When the public cry for improved care escalated, rapid movement of research was a sharper focus in healthcare research. The National Institutes of Health Institute for Nursing Research (NINR), developed the Clinical Translational Science program to speed research-to-practice by redesigning the way healthcare research is conducted ([Zerhouni, 2005](#)). The term, *translational science*, was coined, and the term was defined ([NINR, 2010](#)): "Translational research includes two areas of translation. One area is the translation of discoveries generated during research in the laboratory, and in preclinical development of trials and studies in humans. The second area of translation is the translation of research findings into practice aimed at enhancing the adoption of best practices in the community. The translation of prevention and treatment strategies are [sic] also an important part of this process (Section I, para 2).

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Nurses are involved in each of the 60 CTAs that were funded across the nation...

Nurse scientists have been significant contributors to the program, conducting translational research in various areas. Nurses are involved in each of the 60 CTAs funded across the nation, contributing roles, ranging from advisor and co-investigator. As part of the CTAs, research and applied research, and the interprofessional perspectives of nurses are valued contributors to

of translational science, applying skills in mixed methods and systems

### ***Patient-Centered Outcomes Research***

Another recent and sweeping change in healthcare research emerged with a focus on patient-centered outcomes research (PCOR). As evidence mounted on standard medical metrics (mortality and morbidity), it was noted that metrics and outcomes of particular interest to patients and families (such as quality of life) were understudied. In 2010, attention was drawn to the need to produce evidence on patient-centered outcomes from the perspective of the patient. Congress founded and heavily funded the newly-formed Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) with the following mission: “The Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) helps people make informed health care decisions, and improves health care delivery and outcomes, by producing and promoting high integrity, evidence-based information that comes from research guided by patient and health care community” ([PCORI, 2013](#), para. 1).

Likewise, some of the most recent calls for research from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) are also focusing on PCOR. These calls encourage early involvement of patients and other stakeholders in stating the research question, conducting research, and interpreting results ([AHRQ, 2013](#)). This new direction in healthcare research is co-investigated by patients and families in partnership with health care providers to ensure relevance so that EBP reflects the patient’s viewpoint.

### **The Next Big Ideas**

Two additional federal initiatives exemplify what may be called the next big ideas in healthcare research, underscoring evidence-based quality improvement. The initiatives center on generating knowledge that may be gained from quality improvement efforts. Both NIH and AHRQ focus on generating evidence needed to make systems changes in healthcare. The first is NIH’s expansion of the program on Dissemination and Implementation Science; the second is the development of the research network, the Interdisciplinary Research Network (ISRN).

#### ***NIH Dissemination & Implementation (D&I) Grants***

A call for increased emphasis on implementation of evidence-based practice is part of a new funding program. In January of 2013, the NIH initiative in dissemination and implementation science expanded across 14 institutes, including NINR. In this call for research, the program is defined as “the use of strategies to adopt and integrate evidence-based practice into practice patterns within specific settings” ([NIH, 2013](#), Section 1). This initiative will add to our understanding of how to create, evaluate, replicate, and integrate evidence-based strategies to improve health ([Brownson, Cook, & Brackbill, 2012](#)). The central role that nurses play across all healthcare settings and clinical settings is highlighted.

this field is highly relevant to the profession.

This field of science moves beyond the individual provider as the unit of analysis and focuses on groups, health systems, and the community. D&I research offers nurses opportunities to guide health care transformation at multiple levels, thereby addressing recommendation from the *Future of Nursing*. For example, one emphasis in the field is discovering and applying the evidence for the most effective ways to speed adoption of evidence-based guidelines across all health care professionals in the clinical unit and in the agency. To date, nurse scientists are minimally engaged in D&I research. A recent survey of seven years of NIH projects indicated that only four percent of these were awarded to nurses (Haozous, Shuster, & Meize-Grochowski, 2013).

### ***Improvement Science Research Network***

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The overriding goal of improvement science is to ensure that quality improvement efforts are based as much on evidence as the best practices they seek to implement.

Continuing work with using the A laid a pathway to one of the “next the *study* of strategies for achieving instances, studies about single in often not rigorous or broad enough generalizable knowledge (Berwick improvement science focuses on employing evidence-based practice, guide management decisions in e improvement. The overriding goal ensure that quality improvement evidence as the best practices the

Recognizing that pockets of excellence in safety and effectiveness exist, cases of success in translating research into practice are often difficult. Factors that make a change improvement work in one setting versus another to fill this gap, the Improvement Science Research Network (ISRN) was developed. ISRN is an open research network for the study of improvement strategies. The network offers a virtual collaboratory in which to study systems improvement lessons learned from innovations and quality improvement efforts across settings. The ISRN was developed in response to an NIH call for projects to advance new fields of science.

The ISRN supports rigorous testing of improvement strategies to determine if an intervention for change is effective. The following shortcomings in improvement change strategies have been noted: studies do not yield generalizable knowledge because they are performed in a single setting; the improvement intervention is not described and impact imprecisely measures; information about sustainability is not produced; contexts of implementation are not accounted for; cost or value of research is seldom systematically planned (IOM, 2008b).

The primary goal of the network is to determine which improvement strategies assure effective and safe patient care. Through this national research network, studies are designed and conducted through investigative teams. Foundational research is conducted in a collaboratory, fashioned to conduct multi-site studies and designed to foster academic-practice partnerships in research. The ISRN offers scientists nationwide opportunities to directly engage in conducting studies. “No honor in being large” is one of the guiding principles of ISRN collaboration (ISRN Research Priorities were developed via stakeholder and expert panel).

into four broad categories: transitions in care; high performing clinical quality improvement; and organizational culture ([ISRN, 2010](#)). The proven its capacity to conduct multi-site studies and is open to any in field.

The new NIH D&I grant resources and the ISRN collaboratory are “the EBP today. These will provide the scientific foundation for the rapidly healthcare better. Nurses will take advantage of these EBP advances t challenges.

## **Opportunities and Challenges**

From this admittedly selective overview of EBP, it is seen that the story of EBP in nursing is now long, with many successes, contributors, leaders, scientists, and enthusiasts. Much has been done to make an impact; much remains to be accomplished. Opportunities and challenges exist for clinicians, educators, and scientists.

Those leading clinical practice have willing partners from the academy for discovering what works to improve health care. Such evidence to guide clinical management decisions is long overdue ([Yoder-Wise, 2012](#)). While there are benefits to both as the evidence is gathered and applied, the true benefit goes to the patient. Clinical leaders have unprecedented opportunity to step forward to transform healthcare from a systems perspective, focusing on EBP for clinical effectiveness, patient engagement, and p:

Those leading education have great advantages offered from a wide v for EBP. The rich resources offer students a chance to meaningfully co competencies with clinical needs for best practices in clinical and micr emerge from formal education, students will see great enthusiasm for clinical environments.

Those leading nursing science have access to new funding opportunit programs of research in evidence-based quality improvement, imple science of improvement. Readiness of the clinical setting for academic brings with it advantageous access to clinical populations and settings of the research results.

The challenges for moving EBP forward spring from two sources: nurs interprofessional groups and nurses becoming powerful influencers o the following habits hold promise for moving us ahead:

- Redesigning and/or investigating the redesign of healthcare mastery of teamwork.
- Persistence in educating the future workforce, and retooling awareness, skills, and power to improve the systems of care.
- Laying aside comfortable programs of research and picking research.
- Insistence on multiple perspectives and sound evidence fo

The nursing profession remains central to the interdisciplinary and di necessary to achieve care that is effective, safe, and efficient. New in c systems thinking, microsystems change, high reliability organizations transparency, innovation, translational and implementation science, practice. Let us move swiftly to make these new ideas and skills comm

## Acknowledgment

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## Correction Notice

On September 3, 2013, the Acknowledgment was modified from the original version dated September 31, 2013. Additional information has been added at the request of the

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