



Letter to the editor

Dear Editor,

I want to thank the authors of *Perspectives, experiences, and opinions precepting advanced practice registered nurse students* for their article (Lofgren, Dunn, Dirks, & Reyes, 2021). Clinical experiences for nurse practitioner students are crucial to their education and future practice. However, we would like to address an issue that we believe is a critical one as we move forward as a profession with two different doctoral degrees.

In our collective experience as program evaluators, editors, and faculty members for many years, we have observed this phenomenon frequently; methodologies are erroneously described as quality improvement (QI) when in fact they are not. This contributes to the continued confusion and misunderstanding about expected competencies and outcomes of nurses who earn doctoral degrees; the Doctor of Nursing Practice and the Doctor of Philosophy.

The authors state that their project was a “quality improvement study.” The definition of QI per Health Resources Services Administration is “...systematic and continuous actions that lead to measurable improvement in health care services and health status of targeted patient groups. (U.S Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, 2011, p.1)”. QI is often exemplified by methods such as total quality improvement and Plan Do Study Act (Associates for Process Improvement, 2022) and both include the integral aspect of an “intervention” and measurement of the outcome of the intervention. Indeed, from the name itself, *quality improvement* denotes that the project or study will *improve quality* (or processes). From our reading of this report the study design was cross-sectional and used a survey methodology. This does not meet the definition of QI and does not seek to improve quality in and of itself. Rather, this descriptive study can inform future

research and quality improvement projects, and as such, contributes to the growing body of knowledge regarding clinical experiences of nurse practitioner students.

All nurses can participate in QI as well as research. However, when published (and peer reviewed) all studies should accurately describe their design and methods and follow appropriate reporting guidelines. Because confusing terminology is used, the choice of reporting guideline is also confounded. If reporting results from a quality improvement project, the SQUIRE guideline is recommended; for reporting results of an observational study, the STROBE checklist for cross-sectional studies may be used (visit www.equator-network.org for a comprehensive list of reporting guidelines).

Unclear use of terminology related to QI and research perpetuates nursing’s critics who believe that we are not capable of contributing to either science or improvement of healthcare. We encourage everyone to carefully consider the terminology used when reporting our important work and ensure that is appropriately matches the methodology used.

Term	Julee	Staci
Conceptualization	X	X
Methodology	NA	NA
Software	NA	NA
Validation	NA	NA
Formal analysis	NA	NA
Investigation	NA	NA
Resources	NA	NA
Data curation	NA	NA
Writing original draft	X	
Writing review & editing	X	X
Visualization	NA	NA
Supervision	NA	NA
Project administration	NA	NA
Funding acquisition	NA	NA

REFERENCES

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- Lofgren, M., Dunn, H., Dirks, M., & Reyes, J. (2021). Perspectives, experiences, and opinions precepting advanced practice registered nurse students. *Nursing Outlook*, 69, 913–926.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration (2011). Quality Improvement. p.1.

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