

**The Role of Evidence-Based Practice in Advanced Practice Nursing: Lessons from the
COVID-19 Pandemic**

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Evidence-based practice (EBP) is a core competency of advanced practice nursing, which is important to the role of the advanced practice nurse (APN). For example, COVID-19 highlighted the importance of EBP in dealing with complex healthcare challenges. This essay introduces two main topics: the role of the APN in using EBP and an example of how the APN used EBP to implement proning during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also discusses the data involved, barriers and recommendations related to this example. By exploring these topics, we examine the strengths of EBP in creating an advanced clinical approach to the APN's role.

The primary purpose of this essay is to review the principles of EBP and how the APN incorporates it into practice. APNs play a critical role in healthcare, while EBP is the dominant approach for their clinical decision-making (Tracy et al., 2022). According to Halili et al. (2024), EBP is defined as utilizing the best evidence to make the best clinical decisions based on nursing research. By using EBP, APNs can improve patient outcomes, enhance clinical decisions, continue professional development, and enforce clinical protocols and policies. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic evolved how to practice nursing today, such as implementing prone position in patients with acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS).

Like proning, other issues arose during the COVID-19 pandemic, including staffing shortages, lack of resources, and patient safety issues. According to Brickman et al. (2020), healthcare facilities must utilize and allocate all resources to control the high volume of patients with COVID-19. This included rapid education by clinical nurse specialists and leaders and help from certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs) to manage many ventilated patients. Barriers included lack of familiarity, time constraints, and physical demands. Many staff members were new to prone positioning and had limited time to train based on patient acuity.

Therefore, many APNs and nurses across specialties had to familiarize themselves quickly with new practices when dealing with these critically ill patients (Brickman et al., 2020).

During the pandemic, there was much uncertainty about the outcome of critically ill COVID-19 patients. Due to the unpredictable nature of the virus, APNs needed to fortify their clinical roles in using EBP. Flynn Makic (2020), a clinical nurse specialist, highlights and recommends interventions based on EBP to address barriers in treating COVID-19 patients. Supporting documentation showed that prone positioning could improve oxygenation, reduce mortality, and reduce ventilator-associated lung injury (Flynn Makic, 2020). Even with these benefits, proning can also pose a barrier due to risk of skin integrity and poor pain management. Poor staffing was also a barrier, necessitating strong relationships. Therefore, collaboration among APNs, physicians, nurses, and other healthcare staff was crucial for smoother implementation and troubleshooting interventions in proning.

In summary, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the necessity of evidence-based practice in the role of the advanced practice nurse. Accordingly, APNs utilize EBP to implement effective interventions, such as proning to improve oxygenation in severe ARDS patients. This pandemic characterized the importance of ongoing professional development, interdisciplinary collaboration, and robust training programs. The lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the importance of APNs in prioritizing EBP to promote high-quality care and prepare for future healthcare challenges. These lessons undoubtedly shaped the future of nursing and reinforced the value of EBP in optimizing healthcare delivery.

Resources

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