

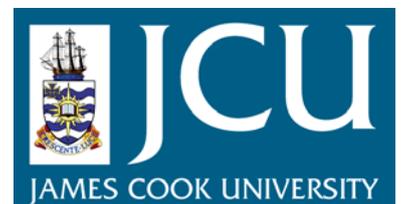
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In at the Deep End:
The Culture of Nursing Research in a Paediatric Ward

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This thesis has been made possible through the support of many people as follows:

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Declaration on Ethics:

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines for research ethics outlined in the *National Statement on Ethics Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (1999), the *Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (1997), the *James Cook University Policy on Experimentation Ethics, Standard Practices and Guidelines* (2001), and the *James Cook University Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (2001). The proposed research methodology received clearance from the James Cook University Experimentation Ethics Review Committee (approval number H1717).

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Abstract

This doctoral thesis reports a critical ethnographic study conducted in the Children's Ward of a regional Australian hospital. The study explored the factors affecting the responses of nurses to the expectation that they would conduct research, and utilise research findings in their clinical practice. It identifies a multitude of facilitative and inhibiting factors affecting their responses, including conceptual, attitudinal and practical factors manifested at personal, local, institutional and broader socio-cultural levels. The critical qualitative methodology of Carspecken was used to structure the conceptualisation and conduct of the research, and a critical Habermasian standpoint was taken when interpreting the findings. Subsequent to an extensive literature review, data was gathered from a wide range of sources, including: non-participant observation; interviews; local documentation; policy statements and directives at ward, institutional and state level; participation in ward-based working groups and the video- and audio-recordings of those meetings. The data suggested that almost all the nurses adopted a worldview in which science is considered authoritative and has legitimacy in all aspects of life, and conceived research as a justifiable expression of this authority. An alternative discourse threaded its way through the ward, in which science was seen as having only partial relevance or legitimacy and a need for other considerations was expressed. This gave rise to a conflict which was also manifested in the nurses' self-understandings and social identities. Conflicting assumptions and demands were associated with the nurses' various professional and personal roles. Strategies that the nurses employed to manage the tensions that arose from these conflicts were identified and their influence on the likelihood of developing research-mindedness and successful participation in research were

considered. Arising from this analysis, recommendations are made which offer a constructive path forward and which should enhance the future of the conduct and implementation of research in the ward and in the wider context of the hospital.

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