

Research Topics & Ideas: Nursing

About this document

This PDF contains 51 **nursing research topics** for dissertations and theses, organized into 10 areas of nursing, from chronic disease management and screening to workforce wellbeing, burnout and retention. Each topic is written as a researchable question and linked to a completed dissertation (2022–2026, 26 universities), so you can see how it was studied in practice. Use it to shortlist nursing dissertation topics and thesis ideas, then narrow one down to your own population, setting and timeframe.

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Chronic disease management and screening

1. What actually improves asthma control in children, as against improving asthma knowledge?

See it in a real dissertation: [Improving Health Outcomes in Children and Adolescents with Asthma](#) · Elizabeth Moore · University of Tennessee Health Science Center · 2024

2. Should every hypertensive patient be screened for sleep apnea?

See it in a real dissertation: [Screening for Obstructive Sleep Apnea in Patients with Hypertension](#) · Doug Schroer · Fort Hays State University · 2025

3. Which barriers actually keep cervical screening rates low in primary care?

See it in a real dissertation: [Improving Cervical Cancer Screening Rates in the Primary Care Setting](#) · Esmeralda Young · University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences · 2023

4. Does home blood pressure logging change control, or only awareness?

See it in a real dissertation: [Standardized Home Blood Pressure Log Implementation for Patients with Hypertension to Increase Patient Awareness and Clinical Action](#) · Ashley Alcala · Grand Valley State University · 2026

5. Why do rural heart failure patients bypass their nearest hospital?

See it in a real dissertation: [Quality of Care and Hospital Bypass Among Rural Heart Failure Patients](#) · Hannah Friedman · University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill University · 2023

Culturally competent and equitable care

6. How much does provider language affect whether an LGBTQ+ patient discloses their identity?

See it in a real dissertation: [Exploring the Impact of Affirming Environment and Provider Language on LGBTQ+ Patients' Identity Disclosure, Identity Concealment, Discomfort, Engagement, and Satisfaction in Primary Care](#) · Michelle Stage · University of Rhode Island · 2026

7. Where in the stroke pathway do women's outcomes diverge from men's?

See it in a real dissertation: [Improving Equity in Women's Stroke Outcomes](#) · Lindsay M. Warner · University of San Diego · 2025

8. Does cultural competency training change how a psychiatric unit treats LGBTQ+ patients?

See it in a real dissertation: [LGBTQ+ Cultural Competency Training for Mental Health Care Workers](#) · Shyla Noelle Herndon-Dye · Walden University · 2026

9. Why does pain get managed differently for different nursing home residents?

See it in a real dissertation: [Multilevel Factors Related to Racial Disparities in Symptom Management among Nursing Home Residents](#) · Cassandra Dictus · University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill · 2024

10. What does inclusion actually look like for a lesbian nursing faculty member?

See it in a real dissertation: [Understanding the Experiences of Lesbian Faculty in Academic Nursing: An Important Step Toward Health Equity](#) · Ellen Garcia · Oregon Health and Science University · 2026

Mental health nursing

11. Does staff training actually make depression screening consistent?

See it in a real dissertation: [Staff Education to Enhance PHQ-9 Depression Screening in a Mental Health Clinic](#) · Constance Gawum Chingo · Walden University · 2026

12. What changes in an outpatient practice once suicide risk is screened systematically?

See it in a real dissertation: [Implementation of the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale at an Outpatient Mental Health Practice to Increase Provider Confidence in Identifying Suicide Risk](#) · Lauren A. Reed · University of San Diego · 2023

13. Does self-care meaningfully offset occupational stress in psychiatric nursing?

See it in a real dissertation: [Occupational Stress in Psychiatric Nurses and the Impact of Self-Care Activities](#) · Jacqueline Lowe · Andrews University · 2022

14. What changes when a psychiatric provider sits in triage rather than on call?

See it in a real dissertation: [Psychiatric Providers in Triage: Evaluating a Triage-based Model of Care](#) · Tiana Kehaunani Yadao · University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill University · 2026

15. Does training change how consistently psychiatric clinicians assess suicide risk?

See it in a real dissertation: [Staff Education on the Implementation of an Evidence-Based, Suicide-Risk-Assessment Education Program for Psychiatric Staff](#) · Yemurai Emily Dzikiti · Walden University · 2026

Nursing education and student preparation

16. Does virtual reality simulation improve a nursing student's clinical judgment, or only their confidence in it?

See it in a real dissertation: [Evaluating a Virtual Reality Simulation-Based Tool in Undergraduate Nursing Students for Impact on Accuracy, Clinical Judgment, Fear, and Self-Confidence when Donning, Doffing, and Disposing of Personal Protective Equipment](#) · Stacy Lynn Russell · West Virginia University · 2023

17. Which students struggle with drug calculations, and can that be predicted before placement?

See it in a real dissertation: [What indicators predict numeracy performance in undergraduate nursing students?](#) · Clare Elizabeth Carpenter · University of Essex · 2024

18. Can an AI reliably score clinical judgment in a simulation, or does it only score fluent writing?

See it in a real dissertation: [Using Chatgpt AI to Analyze Clinical Judgment in Immersive Virtual Reality Simulation from Prelicensure Nursing Students](#) · Shari Ann Fehrenbach · Marquette University · 2026

19. What do nurse educators do when the curriculum takes no position on a legal but contested treatment?

See it in a real dissertation: [Nurse Educators' Experiences With Medical Cannabis Education](#) · Rachel Ann Parmelee · Walden University · 2025

20. How much training does a preceptor actually get before being handed a student?

See it in a real dissertation: [A Survey of Preceptor Training in Clinical Education of Respiratory Care Departments in Selected Hospitals in Metropolitan Atlanta](#) · Tariq Aljasser · Georgia State University · 2022

Nursing leadership, ethics and documentation

21. What does a charge nurse actually do, and does standardizing the role help?

See it in a real dissertation: [Standardizing the charge nurse role for success](#) · Mary Rogers · Drexel University · 2026

22. Does shared governance raise nurse engagement, or only give it a forum?

See it in a real dissertation: [Formal Unit-Based Shared Governance to Improve Nurse Engagement](#) · Tracey Larsen · University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences · 2023

23. Does a standardized handoff sheet make report faster, safer, or merely more uniform?

See it in a real dissertation: [Implementing a Standardized Patient Report Sheet to Improve Timeliness and Efficiency of Patient Handoff Reports: A Quality Improvement Project](#) · Brian F McLaughlin · University of New Hampshire · 2026

24. Does clarifying the charge nurse role fix the workflow, or only name the problem?

See it in a real dissertation: [Optimizing the Charge Nurse Role to Improve Workflow and Communication in a Community Living Center](#) · Ndidi Kalu Ibe · Walden University · 2026

25. Does audit and feedback actually get pain screening documented?

See it in a real dissertation: [Improving pain screen documentation compliance using audit-feedback in an intermediate care unit](#) · Shatterra Plummer · Drexel University · 2026

Older adult and long-term care

26. How did dementia change hospitalization outcomes for long-term care residents during an outbreak?

See it in a real dissertation: [Long-Term Care Facility Residents with Dementia: Their COVID-19 Infection Hospitalization Outcomes](#) · Cheng Yin · University of North Texas · 2024

27. Are antidepressants in nursing homes treating depression or managing agitation?

See it in a real dissertation: [Use and Effectiveness of Antidepressants for Depressive Symptoms and Agitation Among U.S. Nursing Home Residents With Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias](#) · Shiwei Liang · University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School · 2025

28. How does polypharmacy track with physical decline in older adults over time?

See it in a real dissertation: [Examining polypharmacy status, associated symptoms, and the trajectory of physical function and health outcomes in older adults with and without Alzheimer's disease and related dementias](#) · Martha Coates · Drexel University · 2023

29. What drives unnecessary antibiotic prescribing for older adults, and what actually reduces it?

See it in a real dissertation: [Quality Improvement \(QI\) Project Aimed at Reducing Unnecessary Antibiotic Usage Among Older Adult Patients by Addressing Inappropriate Antibiotic Prescribing in Primary and Long-term Care Settings](#) · Pamela M. Thomas · Seton Hall University · 2026

30. What does long-term care owe an older adult who arrives from the street?

See it in a real dissertation: [Trauma-Informed Care for Homeless Older Adults in Long-Term Care Facilities in San Francisco](#) · Bryan A. Reyes · University of San Diego · 2025

Palliative and end-of-life care

31. What delays a palliative referral in pediatric oncology?

See it in a real dissertation: [Initiating Access to Palliative Care Earlier in Pediatric Oncology Patients](#) · Anita Sharma · University of San Diego · 2024

32. What does repeated end-of-life care do to the nurses who provide it?

See it in a real dissertation: [The Effect of Providing End of Life Care on the Mental Health of Critical Care Nurses](#) · Christy Nelson · San Jose State University · 2023

33. What do caregivers of sexual minority hospice patients encounter that others do not?

See it in a real dissertation: [A Phenomenological Study of Caregivers for Sexual Minority Hospice Patients](#) · Catherine H. Bianchi · University of Denver · 2025

34. Does anticipatory prescribing improve symptom control at the end of life?

See it in a real dissertation: [Proactive Prescribing Enhancing Hospice Care Through Anticipatory Pharmacy Practices](#) · Adriana Lynne Chrite · University of Arizona · 2025

35. Do acute care nurses feel equipped for the dying patients they already care for?

See it in a real dissertation: [Does Comfort Care Make You Uncomfortable? Use of the CARES Tool for End-of-Life Symptom Assessment and Management](#) · Christina M. Covington · University of San Diego · 2022

Patient safety and clinical quality improvement

36. Do alcohol-impregnated port protectors reduce central line infections enough to justify the cost?

See it in a real dissertation: [The Use of Alcohol Impregnated Port Catheters for Decreasing Central Line Infections in Acute Care](#) · Shana Coons · University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences · 2023

37. Does educating staff on the catheter bundle actually bring infection rates down?

See it in a real dissertation: [Reducing Catheter-Associated Urinary Tract Infection Rates by Educating Staff on Bundle Interventions](#) · Tirath Kaur · San Jose State University · 2023

38. Why do pressure injuries still happen in surgery when prevention is well understood?

See it in a real dissertation: [Perioperative Pressure Injury Prevention Education Program](#) · Stephanie M Reed · Walden University · 2026

39. What stops a fall prevention program from surviving past the month it launched?

See it in a real dissertation: [Fall Prevention in a Nursing Home](#) · Rene Punsal · Fort Hays State University · 2025

40. Does a structured care transition reduce stroke readmissions, or only shift them later?

See it in a real dissertation: [Decreasing readmission rates in acute stroke patients using a transition of care intervention](#) · Shawanda M Patterson · Drexel University · 2023

41. How much of a nurse's mental workload is alarm noise rather than patient need?

See it in a real dissertation: [A Systems Engineering Approach to Improve Alarm Management and Nurse Mental Workload](#) · Barry Elmore · Louisiana State University · 2025

Staff development and in-service training

42. Does training primary care staff to spot oral health problems change referral rates?

See it in a real dissertation: [Staff Education Project Educational Intervention to Improve Oral health Referrals](#) · Ruby Latosha McCain · Walden University · 2026

43. How do you assess whether a nurse is competent, as opposed to whether they attended the training?

See it in a real dissertation: [Evidenced-Based Practice Competency Assessment for Competency-Based Orientation Protocol to Improve Competency Level Among Medical-Surgical Nurses](#) · Maryann Ornelas · University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences · 2023

44. What does it take to show a competency tool measures the same thing in pediatrics as it does elsewhere?

See it in a real dissertation: [Testing a New Creighton Competency Evaluation Instrument for Pediatric Nursing](#) · Elizabeth Anne Flasch · Marquette University · 2026

45. Does putting a sepsis tool into orientation change what new ICU nurses do at the bedside?

See it in a real dissertation: [Implementation of a TSAM-Based Sepsis Evaluation Tool in a Medical ICU Orientation Program](#) · Courtney Crawford · University of Virginia · 2026

46. How do you build competency assessment for a procedure with no established training standard?

See it in a real dissertation: [Decreasing Dermal Filler Adverse Events Using QSEN and Benner Theoretical Frameworks to Assess Competency](#) · Sukunya Ross · University of San Diego · 2025

Workforce wellbeing, burnout and retention

47. Which part of structural empowerment predicts whether a nursing assistant stays?

See it in a real dissertation: [Four Dimensions of Structural Empowerment, Job Satisfaction, and Their Associations with Turnover Intentions Among Certified Nursing Assistants Employed in U.S. Nursing Homes in 2004](#) · Tamekia Evans · Trident University International · 2022

48. Does a mindfulness program reduce burnout, or teach nurses to tolerate what causes it?

See it in a real dissertation: [Effects of a Mindfulness Intervention on Nurse Burnout](#) · Sandra Elanges · Andrews University · 2023

49. What kind of orientation gives a new graduate the best chance of still being there a year later?

See it in a real dissertation: [Type of Orientation and Differences in Role Transition, Unit Support, Job Satisfaction and Retention Among New Graduate Nurses](#) · Kimber Lee Zolnier · Walden University · 2024

50. Which retention strategies survive a genuinely difficult workplace?

See it in a real dissertation: [Nurse Retention Amid Workplace Adversity: Examining Strategies and Outcomes](#) · H. A. Smith · University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences · 2024

51. Does incivility push nurses out of the emergency department, or is it a symptom of something else?

See it in a real dissertation: [Incivility in Nursing: The Experience of Registered Nurses in the Emergency Department](#) · Karen Voorhees · Seton Hall University · 2026

How to turn a topic into your research question

A topic is a starting point, not something you can research yet. These four steps take you from a topic on this list to a focused question you can actually answer.

1. **Shortlist three, not one.** Pick three topics from this list that genuinely interest you and fit the access you have to people and data.

Recommended reading: [How to find and choose a dissertation topic](#)

2. **Read the dissertation behind each one.** Its literature review and its "recommendations for future research" section show you what is already known and what is still open.

Recommended reading: [How to find a research gap](#)

3. **Narrow it to your setting.** Name one population, one setting and one thing you will measure or explore. That turns a broad topic into a question you can finish.

Recommended reading: [How to write a research question](#)

4. **Line up your aims, objectives and questions.** Your committee will check that they agree.

Recommended reading: [Research aims, objectives and questions](#)

Work through these once and you will have a focused question rather than a broad topic, which is what the rest of your proposal is built on.