

Research Interests and Experience of Social Workers Within a Large Dialysis Organization

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Introduction

- Nephrology social workers play a critical role in the care of patients with End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD); therefore, their experience and skill sets provide a strong foundation to make meaningful contributions to advance ESRD research.
- Interestingly, little is known about the extent to which nephrology social workers participate in ESRD-related research.
- A survey was administered to identify social workers' interest-levels in performing research, perceived barriers to research, as well as, to identify the extent to which social workers participate in research projects.
- We present survey results relating to nephrology social workers' research interests and experience levels within a large dialysis organization.

Objective

- The objectives of this program were to identify via a survey:
- the extent to which social workers are currently involved in ESRD research,
- the level of interest nephrology social workers have in participating in research,
- perceived barriers associated with performing research, and
- the specific areas of interest that social workers would want to perform research in, given the opportunity.

Methods

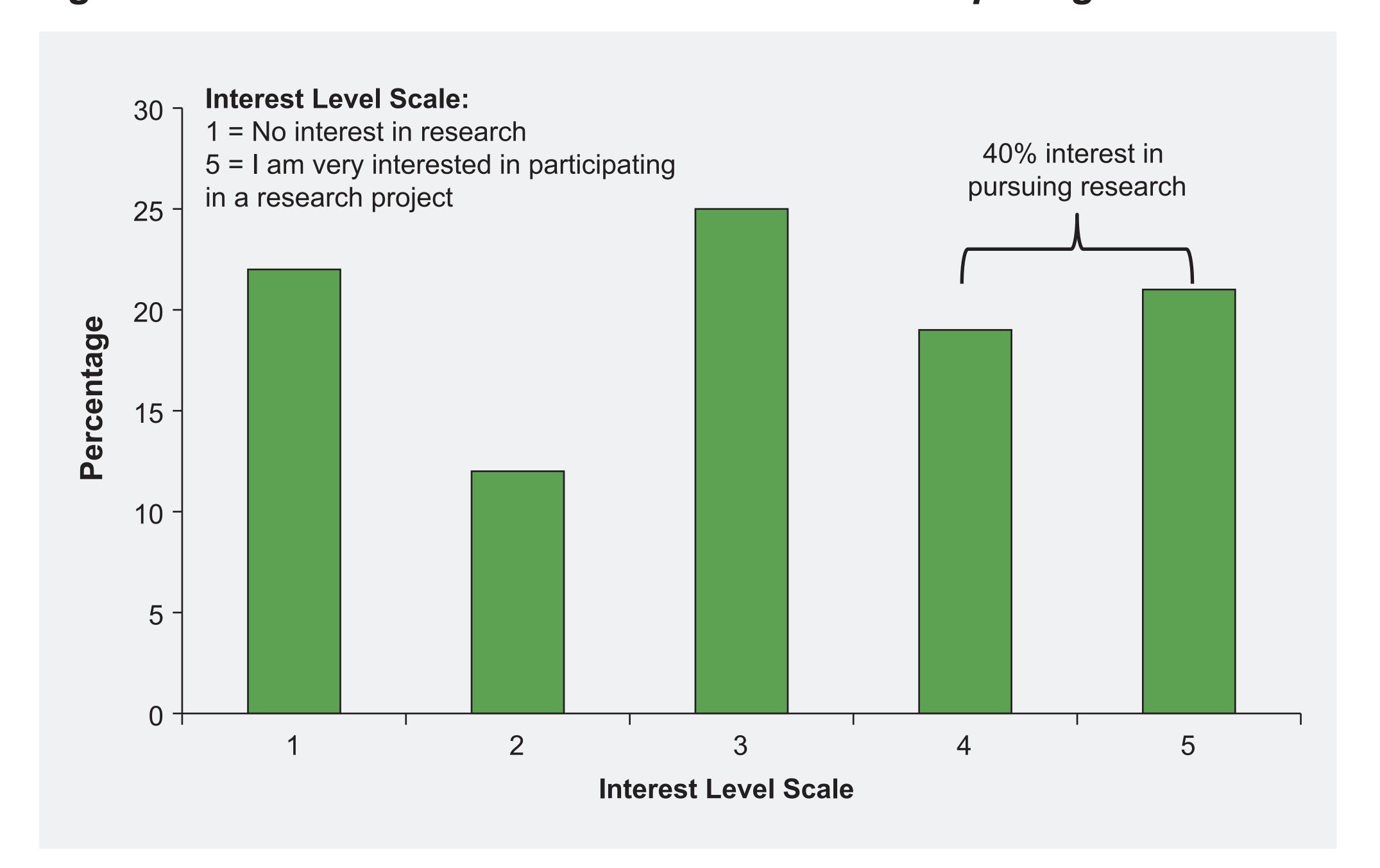
- Social workers within a large dialysis organization completed an online survey regarding their research interests and experiences.
- The survey consisted of 9 questions that dealt with the following topics:
- participation in research,
- level of interest,
- perceived barriers to performing research,
- research areas of interest, and
- roles in research.
- The survey was administered to 1,300 social workers between October and November of 2011.
- The DaVita Social Workers Council and DaVita Clinical Research developed each question included in the survey.
- Zoomerang was the online survey tool used to create the survey and collect and analyze the data.

Results

- 1,300 social workers were asked to participate in the survey and 602 (46%) responses were received.
- 51 (8%) social workers indicated that they had participated in a research project as part of their thesis within the last 5 years.
- 66 (11%) social workers indicated that they had participated in a research project outside of their thesis work.
- Of the 66 (11%) social workers that participated in a research project outside their thesis work, their roles in the research project included:

Principle Investigator: 16 (20%)
Sub-Investigator: 32 (40%)
Study Coordinator: 23 (28%)
Consultant: 19 (23%)

Figure 1: Social Workers Interest Level in Participating in Research



Top research areas of interest* among respondents included:

Medication adherence: 367 (65%)
Motivational interviewing: 287 (50%)

related to central venous catheter reduction efforts

Modality education: 243 (43%)
Vocational rehabilitation: 169 (30%)
Video education: 106 (19%)

*Respondents top areas of interest were selected from a multiple choice-style list.

Table 1: Barriers Associated With Participating in Research

Survey Responses	Number	Percent
No opportunity	247	41%
No capacity	144	24%
Lack of interest	135	22%
No management support	56	9%
Lack of skills	20	3%

Discussion

- Results generated from the survey identify the current level of participation in research by renal social workers, as well as the potential barriers associated with initiating research projects.
- The areas of research that social workers have identified as a priority are well aligned with the needs of the ESRD community.
- Interestingly, when survey respondents were asked to indicate additional areas of research interest, the following topics were listed:
- patient mental health issues: depression, anxiety, substance abuse,
- patient quality of life,
- caseload size and quality of care, and
- treatment adherence issues.
- The areas of research priority identified by renal Social Workers are aligned with the current research needs of the ESRD community.
- Given the interest level of social workers, what are the best strategies to engage social workers in pursuing research?
- ESRD and dialysis organizations should consider providing opportunities and support for the renal Social Workers team to participate in research.

Conclusions

- Research interests and perceived barriers associated with participating in an ESRD-related research projects were successfully identified for social workers through the use of the devised survey.
- 602 (46%) responses to the survey were received.
- Key results from social workers regarding the survey indicate that:
- 41% did not have the opportunity to participate in research
- 40% were interested in pursuing research
- 24% lacked the capacity to perform research
- 9% lacked perceived management support
- 3% did not have the skills to perform research
- Top research areas of interest included:
- Medication adherence
- Motivational interviewing related to central venous catheter reduction efforts
- Modality education
- Vocational rehabilitation
- Video education
- Additional research areas of interest included:
- Patient mental health issues: depression, anxiety, substance abuse
 Patient quality of life
- Caseload size and quality of care
- Treatment adherence issues

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