Michigan Nursing Research Journal Club

Project Report

MDHHS
Michigan Department of Health & Human Services

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Recent studies highlight that the research-to-practice gap in nursing remains significant. Implementation science research published in the last several years confirms that the average time required to translate new evidence into widespread clinical practice continues to hover around 15–17 years, despite growing efforts to accelerate adoption (Proctor et al., 2022; Finney Rutten et al., 2024). Translating evidence into practice remains slow, largely due to systemic barriers such as inconsistent infrastructure, workflow constraints and organizational readiness issues, as well as individual-level challenges like training gaps and variable competency in implementation methods (Abu-Odah et al., 2022; Proctor et al., 2022). Together, these findings demonstrate that although nursing research increasingly prioritizes implementation, the gap between discovery and practice persists.

Through structured open forums, journal clubs offer a platform for evaluating the validity, reliability and applicability of current research evidence, thereby bridging the research-practice gap and enhancing research capabilities. The adoption of journal clubs in nursing education has been shown to yield numerous benefits. Not only do they improve students' confidence in critical appraisal and presentation skills, but they also foster a community of evidence-based practice (EBP), laying the foundation for future nursing leaders (Sortedahl et. al, 2018). By actively engaging in journal club sessions, students have the opportunity to enhance their understanding of research processes, practice critical appraisal skills and evaluate research findings for potential utility in nursing practice.

Social determinants of health (SDOH) are non-medical factors that significantly influence health outcomes. According to the World Health Organization (2026), SDOH are “broadly defined as the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, and people’s access to power, money and resources – have a powerful influence on health inequities.” The complexity of addressing SDOH underscores the importance of ensuring nurse researchers are well prepared to effectively conduct research initiatives using evidence-based practice, providing essential information for improving health care. To support the integration of evidence-based research related to SDOH in nursing research and care, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Office of Nursing Programs (MDHHS ONP) invested in the Michigan Nursing Research (MINR) Journal Club by facilitating and funding the continuing education credits (CEs) for participants, and the human resources involved in conducting the short course, together with a librarian from the University of Michigan. This report details the MINR Journal Club project process and outcomes.

Background

In the realm of nursing education and professional development, the utilization of journal clubs stands as a cost-effective strategy to ensure nurses remain abreast of the latest clinical evidence, fostering the application of evidence-based research and practice. Moreover, the adaptable framework renders journal clubs as potent educational tools, capable of imparting knowledge to a diverse array of partners, including students, nurses and other health care team members, across both academic and continuing education settings (Valizadeh et al., 2022). Innovative strategies such as extracurricular journal clubs have emerged as a promising avenue to enhance the fundamental components of EBP implementation, critical-thinking skills, confidence and leadership abilities among nursing students (Costa et. al, 2024; Kim et. al, 2020; Son et. al, 2020; Valizadeh et. al, 2022).

The primary objective of the MINR Journal Club was to provide burgeoning nurse researchers with a platform to collaborate with peers and seasoned experts, embarking on a journey to explore and embrace the intricacies of SDOH in research endeavors. The secondary objective was to develop quality, useful information for dissemination, designed to further the understanding of incorporating SDOH into nursing research. The overarching goal was to enhance health outcomes, contribute to the expanding knowledge base and champion equitable health outcomes through nursing research that is skillfully inclusive of SDOH concepts.

Infrastructure and Participant Selection

Co-coordinators Dr. Sarah Jennings and Jenna Lepczyk combined their skills, experience and qualifications to provide both administrative and scientific leadership for the MINR Journal Club. As the senior nurse advisor in the MDHHS ONP, Jennings has the support of the team members and the larger organization. The organizational structure allowed necessary time and space for preparation and execution. Jenna Lepczyk serves as a health sciences informationist at the University of Michigan. Lepczyk works closely with faculty, students and staff who research SDOH and support their mission for health equity. Lepczyk developed a shared, online learning space for participants to access, where all MINR Journal Club materials were housed as well as links to the scheduled virtual meetings and other important course information. Lepczyk selected current and meaningful journal articles, and Jennings facilitated the discussions. The combination of expertise in journal article selection, course establishment and facilitation skills of Lepczyk and Jennings' previous experiences provided a solid foundation for implementation of the MINR Journal Club.

There was an application process for selection to participate in the MINR Journal Club. The link to the application was disseminated to graduate nursing schools in Michigan and Michigan nursing community partners through multiple means of communication, including emails to department heads, advertisements in the MDHHS Bureau of Policy and Planning SDOH Hubs, advertisements in the monthly ONP newsletter, the ONP webpage and verbal updates at partner meetings.

Those accepted for participation were notified via email on Friday, Sept. 1, 2025, which included detailed information about participation, including a meeting schedule, guidelines for participation and group assignments for the journal club presentation. Group assignments were randomly selected using a random team generator, while avoiding placing two students from the same school in the same group when possible. There were five participants per group. Workgroups were assigned a theme determined through scholarly research on the topic of SDOH.

The opportunity was open to any student enrolled in a graduate school of nursing program in Michigan for a total of 30 student participants. Participants were selected on a first-come, first-served basis, with two participants from each school taking precedence. Empty spaces were then filled by the date and time of applications from all schools. The MINR Journal Club met virtually on a monthly basis for a total of five times during the 2025-2026 academic year, beginning in October 2025 and concluding in April 2026, excluding the months of December (due to scheduling conflicts) and February (due to low participation).

Table 1. SDOH Themes for Journal Club Articles

Regulatory and Policy Issues	State legislative agendas, policy briefs.
Clinical Opportunities	Frameworks for application of SDOH data gathering in primary care, specialty care, long-term care, home care.
Education	SDOH curriculum for health care providers and students, journal club best practices and/or a collection of resources.
Technology	Emerging solutions, artificial intelligence (AI) impact on SDOH.
Patient Equity	Health care access, communications, urban/rural populations.
Research	Research design, evaluation, implementation of SDOH concepts in nursing practice.

*Themes adapted from the “Telehealth Post-Pandemic: A Roadmap for the Coming Decade” think tank event (Holtz, Hirko, & Ford, 2024).

Data Analysis

A post-event survey was distributed via email to all participants following the last meeting of the MINR Journal Club. Participants were reminded they would need to complete the survey to receive CEs for the journal club sessions they attended. Duplicate and incomplete survey attempts were eliminated from results, resulting in nine completed survey responses analyzed for this report. Information gathered from the survey was aggregated to inform future iterations of the MINR Journal Club.

Participants shared that the event broadened their perspectives on nursing practice, particularly around culturally competent care, SDOH, ethics and emerging topics like AI. Many expressed feeling better prepared to discuss complex issues in their work settings and planned to integrate evidence-based knowledge into daily practice, patient care and nursing research. Several noted that applying these insights may require system-level support, but they felt more aware, informed and intentional about addressing gaps in care.

More specifically, the MINR post-event survey results reflect a highly successful learning experience with strong endorsement from participants across every major dimension of training quality, relevance and facilitation. Responses to Likert-scale questions show consistent patterns of “Agree” and “Strongly Agree,” demonstrating both satisfaction and perceived value of the training (see Appendix A). Participants strongly affirmed that the program met its stated purpose, achieved the learning objectives and delivered meaningful outcomes (see Appendix B).

The training content was viewed as relevant, well-structured and thoughtfully aligned with participants’ learning needs. Respondents consistently agreed that the material was presented at a comfortable pace, culturally appropriate for the populations they serve and delivered using effective and engaging teaching methods. These findings indicate strong content validity and high-quality instructional design. Neutral or negative responses were almost nonexistent, suggesting that the training uniformly met or exceeded expectations. The few neutral selections occurred sporadically and did not form patterns indicating any widespread concerns. There were no “disagree” or “strongly disagree” selections from any participant for any survey question.

Feedback regarding presenter performance was exceptionally positive. Participants characterized the presenters as organized, knowledgeable, attentive and skilled at maintaining engagement. Across multiple presenter-related questions, the dominant response was “Strongly Agree,” reflecting deep confidence in their expertise and instructional approach. Respondents also appreciated the clear

explanations, use of practical examples and the presenters' ability to communicate complex topics at an accessible level.

Overall, attendees appreciated the diverse mix of participants, relevant and engaging article selections and the organized, knowledgeable facilitation. They valued the thoughtful discussions and exposure to a wide range of nursing and health care research topics. Suggestions for improvement included offering the program year-round, providing clearer expectations upfront, adding more focus on research methods, adjusting session timing or shortening the program duration. Despite these minor suggestions, participants generally found the experience meaningful, enjoyable and worth continuing. In summary, the evaluation results portray a high impact, well-received training that effectively delivered relevant, culturally responsive content through skilled facilitation. Participants expressed strong satisfaction and endorsement, providing a clear indication that the MINR program successfully supported learning and engagement across the cohort.

Discussion

The MINR Journal Club demonstrated steady progress throughout the course, with early sessions establishing strong engagement and productive discussion among graduate nursing students across Michigan. The initial three of the six planned meetings were successfully completed, with robust participant analyses, active conversation and effective networking across institutions. Attendance was strong initially and began to fluctuate due to academic schedules, but participants consistently demonstrated thoughtful engagement with SDOH concepts, including emerging topics such as AI and equity implications. Facilitators identified challenges with inconsistent preparation and responded with clear mitigation strategies, including proactive communication and readiness checks to support effective group discussion.

In the next three scheduled meetings, the journal club continued to advance its objectives despite periodic cancellations and lower-than-target attendance. Facilitators maintained continuity by preparing analyses when needed, adjusting meeting structures and strengthening communication. Participant feedback showed high satisfaction with program content, facilitation quality and relevance to nursing practice. Survey results reflected that students gained confidence in applying evidence-based SDOH concepts, strengthened cross-institutional professional connections and valued the culturally responsive, well-paced instruction. All major milestones were completed by the end of June 2026, including CE certificate distribution and survey analysis. Participants offered constructive insights for future improvements, such as clearer expectations, enhanced focus on research methodology and consideration of a collaborative conference protocol to improve equity and reduce preparation burden.

Conclusion

The MINR Journal Club effectively fulfilled its purpose of strengthening nursing research capacity related to SDOH by providing a structured, collaborative learning environment that bridged theory, evidence and real-world practice. As outlined in the project's objectives, the initiative supported emerging nurse researchers in developing confidence, critical-thinking skills and analytical abilities essential for integrating SDOH into evidence-based inquiry. The quarterly progress demonstrated that, despite fluctuations in attendance and occasional challenges with participant preparation, students consistently engaged in meaningful dialogue, expanded their understanding of complex topics such as ethics and artificial intelligence and built professional connections across institutions. These outcomes align closely with the established literature showing journal clubs as cost-effective, adaptable mechanisms for enhancing research literacy, appraisal skills and leadership development among nursing learners. Through this inaugural cohort, the MINR Journal Club not only contributed valuable insights for future iterations, including opportunities to refine meeting structures, clarify expectations and adopt more equitable engagement models, but also laid a strong foundation for advancing equitable, evidence-based nursing research that is thoughtfully inclusive of SDOH concepts. This work reinforces the journal club's role as a vital tool in preparing nurse researchers to generate high-quality, impactful knowledge that supports improved health outcomes for diverse populations.

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Appendix A

MINR Post-Event Survey 25-26

Default Question Block

Thank you for attending this activity. Your input is important to us! This evaluation will allow you to provide feedback on the activity. The results are used to evaluate the activity and in the planning for future offerings. Completion of this evaluation is required in order to obtain continuing education. Your answers are reported in aggregate and will remain confidential. Purpose Statement: The purpose of the MINR journal club is to address a gap in SDOH research knowledge and application in nursing research initiatives to enhance health outcomes, contribute to the expanding knowledge base, and champion optimal health through nursing research that is skillfully inclusive of SDOH concepts. Objectives: The learning objectives of the MINR journal club include that participants will be able to: Identify key evidence-based research findings related to social determinants of health (SDOH). Discuss the research findings application to nursing practice through participation in a synchronous, online journal club. Establish professional connections that support collaboration and mentorship in nursing research focused on SDOH. Describe personal insights and lessons learned during the journal club. Outcome Statement: The overarching goal is to enhance health outcomes, contribute to the expanding knowledge base, and champion equitable health outcomes through nursing research that is skillfully inclusive of SDOH concepts.

Q1 The training met the Purpose Statement shown above. *

- Disagree (1)
- Neutral (2)
- Agree (3)

Q2 The training achieved the Objectives shown above. *

- Disagree (1)
- Neutral (2)
- Agree (3)

Q3 The training met the Outcome Statement shown above. *

- Disagree (1)
- Neutral (2)
- Agree (3)

Block 1 Questions

Please evaluate the following based on your experience at the training.

Q4 The content was relevant to my learning needs.
- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q5 The content was consistent with the stated purpose and objectives.
- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q6 The training used teaching methods that were effective.
- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q7 The length was sufficient to meet the training purpose and objectives.
- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q8 The information was presented at a comfortable pace.
- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q9 The content was culturally appropriate to the populations I serve.
- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q10 I would recommend this training to others.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Block 2 Questions

Please evaluate the presenter (Jenna Lepczyk)

Q11 The presenter was organized and prepared.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q12 The presenter demonstrated a high level of skill and knowledge.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q13 The presenter's teaching methods kept my attention and interest.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q14 The presenter's information was presented at a level I could understand.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q15 The presenter used examples to clarify content.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q16 I would recommend this presenter for another training.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q17 The presenter's information was performed without bias.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Block 3 Questions

Please evaluate the presenter (Sarah Jennings)

Q18 The presenter was organized and prepared.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q19 The presenter demonstrated a high level of skill and knowledge.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q20 The presenter's teaching methods kept my attention and interest.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q21 The presenter's information was presented at a level I could understand.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q22 The presenter used examples to clarify content.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q23 I would recommend this presenter for another training.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Q24 The presenter's information was performed without bias.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Block 4 Questions

Identify new skills, abilities, or knowledge gained as a direct result of this event.

Q25 Do you feel the knowledge, skills, or abilities gained at this activity will change your practice?

- Yes (1)
- Not sure (2)
- No (3)

Q26 How will you change your daily practice based on information gained? Or explain why you feel there was no change in practice.

_____

Q27 How often will you use the new skills, abilities, or knowledge gained from this event? *

- Daily (1)
- Weekly (2)
- Monthly (3)
- I did not learn anything new. (4)

Q28 What did you like BEST about this event?

_____

Q29 How could this event be improved for the future?

_____

Q30 Additional comments are welcome.

_____

Q31 Topic ideas or presenter suggestions for future events are always welcome. Please list your ideas or suggestions here.

_____

Q32 A collaborative conference protocol (a guided group discussion where participants come prepared to engage, but the actual work is completed together during the meeting) would be a better way to conduct the MiNR Journal Club. In other words, time would be designated at the beginning of the meeting for participants to read the article, and the remainder of the meeting would be guided discussion, with no commitment to work/prepare a presentation outside of the meeting time.

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Block 5 Questions

This section of the evaluation is used for the purpose of Continuing Education certificates and is separate from the rest of the evaluation. Please enter your name and email address to receive your CE certificate for the sessions in which you participated.

_____

Appendix B

Q26. How will you change your daily practice based on knowledge gained?
I think I'm more prepared to talk about the issues that need discussing in whatever setting I'm working.
This broadened my thinking and perspectives on nursing care, even if I am not directly in bedside care. I will share this as a leader and educator in nursing.
Be more cognizant of the topics discussed.
I really like some of the articles that we went over. I absolutely love the art of life presented on, and I feel like it opened my eyes too how to change gaps in care.
Providing culturally competent care and addressing SDOH.
Culture is different to change overnight.
New perspectives on issues that are highly relevant to all aspects of nursing, such as racism, use of AI modeling/platforms, ethics, social determinants of health, etc.
I will apply the evidence based knowledge that I gained from this journal club to my daily practice.
Use the information to better serve my patients.
By considering such measures in my nursing research.
By implementing the knowledge that I have gained from the MiNR journal club.

Understanding and considering the SDOH during patient care.
Changes require system support.

Q28. What did you like best about this event?
It gathered students from different universities and we all had such diverse experiences.
The discussion atmosphere.
The inclusion of current topics such as AI and ethics in the discussions.
I loved the articles that were selected. I feel like they were relevant to practice.
Topics were interesting.
Learned about a lot of different areas of research in nursing and health care.
The monthly discussion, the types of articles.
Good learning experience and helped with deeper dives into presented topics.
Sarah and Jenna were both organized and informed about every topic we discussed.

Q29. How could this event be improved in the future?
I'd like this to be a year-round thing.
When the confirmation email is sent to the participant, I think those who will agree to participate should have more information about the expectations for this journal club.

N/A.

Nothing it was lovely.

Would like a bit more focus on "dissecting" the research method.

Maybe a different time of the day?

None.

None.

Q30. Additional comments are welcome.

Unfortunately, few groups did not continue, perhaps shorten the duration of the program to semester.

None.

Thank you for this opportunity, it was worth it to be part of this club.

Q31. Topic ideas or presenter suggestions for future events are always welcome. Please list your ideas or suggestions here.

I thought there was a large variation in topics which was nice.

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