This is a Brief Online Learning Tutorial (or BOLT) brought to you by the LISTEN project, a HRSA funded project focusing on improving the information literacy competencies of nursing students and professional nurses.
Before integrating new information into your evidence-based nursing practice (EBNP), you must evaluate the authority of the resource. The quality and safety of the patient care you provide is dependent on authoritative and reliable evidence. This tutorial will focus on determining the authority of a resource.
The amount of information can be overwhelming! How do you determine if the author/organization responsible for the information in a book, journal article or internet site, is an authority? With all the information available how can we be sure the information is reliable? You can prevent the use unreliable resources by asking questions about the authority of a resource.
Specific questions about the author can help determine the authority of the resource. Has your instructor or Nurse educator mentioned the author’s name before? Have you seen the author’s name or organization before in other sources? If an author or organization is cited in multiple sources, this is one indication of the authority of the information.
Always determine the educational background, school or organizational affiliation of all resources. Has the author’s work appeared in multiple types of resources; such as, the Internet, texts or peer-reviewed journals? What is the authors expertise?
Many times it may be more difficult finding the author or the organization supporting the resource. So, determine if the Internet site offers contact information. Many times this information is found at the bottom of the page. Sometimes at the top, always look to see if this option is available. Authoritative sites normally provide an opportunity for questions and comments. For example, an authoritative site will at least provide an ‘about us’ or ‘contact us’ link that will let you know what they are, who their staff is, privacy statements, advertising policies, and/or simply how to reach them.
Evaluate authority by asking...

- What makes this resource an authority?
- Who is the author?
- What is the author or organizations' affiliation?
- What are the credentials?
- Is contact information provided?

Remember, when evaluating a resource, the first step is to determine the authority of the resource. What gives this source authority? By using these guidelines you will be able to evaluate and determine the authority of your resources and inform your practice with reliable information.
For more information visit
http://www.listenuphealth.org
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