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An evaluation of the Florence Nightingale Foundation Travel and Research scholarships programmes

Final report

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Executive summary

Introduction and Background

The Florence Nightingale Foundation (FNF) awards scholarships to UK nurses and midwives, to advance the study of nursing and midwifery and to promote excellence in practice. There is a professional requirement for all nurses and midwives to engage with lifelong learning and keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date so as to ensure that they are fit for purpose and practice. FNF scholarships provide an opportunity for personal and professional development for nurses and midwives and could have an important impact on nursing and midwifery practice nationally. However, to date, no formal evaluation of the two largest scholarship programmes (Research and Travel scholarships) has been conducted. A literature search revealed few evaluations of personal scholarships for nurses and midwives.

Aims and objectives

Study aim and objectives

The aim was to evaluate the FNF's Travel and Research scholarship programmes. The specific objectives were to:

1. Develop a profile of nurses and midwives who have been awarded Research and Travel scholarships and make comparisons between the two programmes;
2. Examine the scholars' expectations of their scholarships and their overall experiences;
3. Examine scholars' perceptions of the impact of their scholarships, in relation to: their career, their personal, professional practice, patient care, safety and experience, and their profession and colleagues;
4. Examine whether, and how, scholars disseminate the outcomes of their scholarship awards;
5. Explore scholars' perceptions of support from the FNF and any improvements needed;
6. Elicit scholars' views about how the scholarships could be better promoted to other nurses or midwives.

Method

The evaluation used a survey design, using a questionnaire which was delivered electronically, using 'Survey Monkey'. All nurses and midwives who were awarded Travel and Research scholarships in the previous two years were invited to participate, the total being 139: 66 Research scholars and 73 Travel scholars. The questionnaire comprised closed, mainly Likert-style, questions and free text questions. The quantitative data from the questions were analysed using descriptive statistics and the free text comments were analysed thematically. The evaluation proposal gained ethical approval from London South Bank University's Research Ethics Committee.

Results

There was a 59% response rate; 82 scholars responded, of whom 34 were research scholars and 48 were travel scholars. The number of years since initial professional

registration ranged from 1 year to 38 years, with a mean of 20 years overall. For Research scholars, the mean was 17 years while for Travel scholars, the mean was 23 years. For the majority of scholars, the highest level academic qualification was masters/post-graduate level; Travel scholars were slightly more likely to have already gained post-graduate qualifications. Professional roles at the point the scholarship was awarded were categorised as: Education, Practitioner, Research/Research Nurse, Student, and Executive Management; 35 (45%) had changed roles during or since the scholarship. The highest proportion of scholars were Practitioners and their fields of practice and levels were varied. The Travel scholars explored a wide range of practice within different contexts, internationally and within the UK. Research scholars undertook specific research modules, funded research study, or conducted research activities. Scholars stated their expectations of their scholarships and the majority reported that their expectations were met, with many commenting positively on their scholarship opportunities. The vast majority of scholars rated their scholarship experience highly, with many appreciative comments about the opportunity and support from the FNF.

Most scholars believed that the scholarship had had a positive impact on their career and there were a number of comments about increased confidence, their enhanced knowledge and skills and how their career had developed since. There was general agreement from scholars that the scholarship had also impacted positively on their personal, professional practice and comments related to new understandings and perspectives, evidence-based practice and increased confidence. The majority of scholars considered that their scholarships had positively impacted on their colleagues; the comments related to improved practice amongst colleagues, inspiring colleagues to undertake scholarships and a raised profile of the team due to the scholarship award. Most scholars believed that their scholarships had also had a wider impact on their profession as a whole though some considered that wider impact would occur later, resulting from further dissemination. There was reference to a 'ripple' effect of scholarships, beyond individual impact.

The majority of scholars expected that they would continue with further research or scholarship activities and many outlined current developments with some building on their FNF scholarship work. Scholars had disseminated their work through local publications and presentations and some had also already published in journals or presented at national or international conferences. Travel scholars were more likely to have already published than Research scholars. There were many other dissemination activities in planning.

The majority of scholars evaluated the support from the FNF very well and their comments related to the administration of the scholarship, input from the leadership within the organisation and the interest that was demonstrated in the scholars' activities. As regards further support, some scholars suggested links to other scholars or mentorship from a previous scholar. Suggestions for further promoting the scholarships included wider marketing of the opportunities. The vast majority of scholars responded that they would encourage colleagues to apply for an FNF scholarship and some scholars wrote that they had already done so.

Discussion and Recommendations

The overall findings indicated that both the Travel and the Research scholarships are of great value from a number of perspectives. Importantly, they allow the scholars the opportunity to develop both personally and professionally, offer good opportunities to develop networks with the potential to lead to on-going collaborative relationships, and have a perceived impact on practice. Of particular relevance is this latter point, with many scholars noting that the impact has a 'ripple effect' with learning impacting on the individual, the organisation and more widely.

Recommendations are made in relation to the potential to promote the scholarships more widely, to review some aspects of how information for scholars is communicated, and further

increase opportunities for networking within the scholarship community. The overarching recommendation is that these scholarships should continue to be offered so that other nurses and midwives will benefit in ways that continue to inspire and motivate practitioners to make a positive difference to practice.

1. Introduction

The Florence Nightingale Foundation (FNF) is an organisation that awards scholarships to UK nurses and midwives, to advance the study of nursing and midwifery and to promote excellence in practice. FNF scholarships provide an opportunity for personal and professional development for nurses and midwives, the aim being a positive impact on nursing and midwifery practice. However, to date, no formal evaluation of the two largest scholarship programmes (Research and Travel scholarships) has been conducted. This evaluation used an electronically delivered survey to evaluate the impact of FNF Research and Travel scholarship awards, from the perspectives of nurses and midwives who have completed their scholarships, and the results are presented in this report.

2. Background and rationale

There is a requirement for all nurses and midwives to keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date so as to ensure that they are fit for purpose and practice (Nursing and Midwifery Council [NMC] 2008). What this brings into play is the notion of lifelong learning – a need for nurses and midwives to engage in professional development to inform their practice and enable them to fulfil their potential. Gopee's (2005) literature review highlights the key reasons that lifelong learning is an important aspect of professional practice as being:

- the need for practitioners to be self-directed so that they can access the required knowledge for their practice as and when it is needed;
- the mandatory requirement for continuing professional education;
- the evolving nature of healthcare and practice (for example, relating to technological advancements) with the associated need for professional development;
- the relationship between professional development and the shift along the continuum of novice to expert for the enhancement of clinical practice.

The overall aim of a lifelong learning approach is to ensure that clinical practice is evidence-based, skilled, and led appropriately (Petaloti 2009). How nurses and midwives interact with the concept of lifelong learning is varied, and requirements from the NMC are flexible. The FNF scholarships are one way in which professionals can take forward development that relates directly to their professional role.

The FNF provides several different types of scholarships, which are made available through charitable funding kindly made available by Sponsors. Any UK nurse or midwife with current registration with the NMC can apply for a scholarship. While these scholarship programmes have been established for some time, formal evaluation of their impact has not previously been undertaken. However, in 2010, a small-scale evaluation of the FNF/Burdett Trust Leadership programme was conducted with thirteen scholars using an online survey and telephone interviews. A larger, 3 year cohort evaluation of this programme has just been completed. The participants reported that there had been a positive impact on their career development, their confidence had increased and there had been both direct and indirect positive impacts on patient care, safety and experience (Giordano 2010). The Research and Travel scholarships are two of the largest FNF scholarship programmes. The Research scholarships are awarded for projects which will be of direct benefit to patients and the professions more widely and are awarded for a scholar to undertake further study in research and for post-doctoral nursing research projects. The Travel scholarships are awarded to enable the study of nursing/midwifery practice elsewhere in the UK and/or overseas, with the aim of enhancing patient/user care in the UK. Both programmes could therefore have an important impact on nursing and midwifery practice nationally but no formal evaluation of these has been conducted to date.

A literature search revealed few evaluations of personal scholarships for nurses and midwives. One exception was Goodman et al.'s (2005) evaluation of a scholarship programme for perioperative care nurses in the United States (US). They conducted a survey using postal questionnaires mailed to 375 scholarship holders, of which 113 responded (30% response rate). The majority reported that they had achieved their educational and career goals set out for their scholarship award but some reported that their scholarship achievements had not been recognised by employers. Happell et al. (2003) reported on a Clinical Research Fellowship programme in Australia to support mental health nurses to change practice, based on high quality research evidence. The programme was evaluated through a qualitative study, with interviews of four participants and seven managers. The evaluation indicated a positive impact though it was considered that further follow-up support of the scholarship holders was necessary to achieve maximum effect. A few personal accounts were also identified, which reported that scholarships can offer value to both the individual scholar and more widely. Rushworth (2008) reported on a study tour funded by the FNF during which he visited 16 universities across the UK, Eire, Canada and the US. He explored the teaching of 'History Taking and Physical Assessment', which led to changes to practice within his institution and recommendations for further research. Terry (2013) also reports on the experience of a travel scholarship, which was used to study service user and carer involvement in nurse education. Terry undertook a four week study tour to explore best practice in the UK and Ireland, enabling her to make recommendations about prerequisite processes, the range of involvement activities, quality assurance and evaluation and sustainability of user involvement in nurse education.

There are also some accounts in the literature of institution-based programmes to support research amongst nurses (Latimer and Kimbell 2010). Hobbs et al. (2008) reported on a fellowship scheme in the US to support nurses' research development at pre and post-doctoral level; however only informal evaluation of this scheme was presented. A clinical research fellowship scheme at one centre in Australia was evaluated using a cross-sectional qualitative evaluation survey of nurses and allied health staff (Milne et al. 2007). The evaluation indicated that the training programme increased participants' ability and confidence to generate meaningful research questions and then investigate these in a rigorous manner. Gattuso et al. (2007) reported on an evidence-based practice fellowship programme at a children's hospital in the US, which was developed from a pre-existing hospital-based nursing research fellowship programme. The programme was evaluated using a rating scale with a consistent outcome of being moderately effective to very effective. Gattuso et al. (2007) asserted that it was of particular benefit to the institution that the fellowship programme empowered clinical staff with the tools, skills, and experience they needed to practise in an evidence-based manner. The literature search also revealed articles describing a three-year fellowship advanced leadership programme for nurses in senior executive roles, in order to inspire them help lead and shape the future US healthcare system, but no evaluation was included (Bellack and Morjikian 2005; Morjikian and Bellack 2005).

In summary, various scholarship programmes in both the UK and overseas have been reported. These schemes have potential to support lifelong learning and the development of individual nurses and midwives and could impact more widely on nursing and midwifery practice. However, little evaluation of these programmes has been reported, despite considerable investment in such initiatives.

3. Study aim and objectives

The aim was to evaluate the FNF's Travel and Research scholarship programmes. The specific objectives were to:

1. Develop a profile of nurses and midwives who have been awarded Research and Travel scholarships and make comparisons between the two programmes;
2. Examine the scholars' expectations of their scholarships and their overall experiences;
3. Examine scholars' perceptions of the impact of their scholarships, in relation to: their career, their personal, professional practice, patient care, safety and experience, and their profession and colleagues;
4. Examine whether, and how, scholars disseminate the outcomes of their scholarship awards;
5. Explore scholars' perceptions of support from the FNF and any improvements needed;
6. Elicit scholars' views about how the scholarships could be better promoted to other nurses or midwives.

4. Study design

The study used a survey design, using a questionnaire which was delivered electronically, using 'Survey Monkey'. A survey is an appropriate approach for eliciting views and perceptions and enables collection of quantitative data, with some illuminative qualitative data being collected through free text responses.

4.1 Participants

All nurses and midwives who were awarded Travel and Research scholarships in the previous two years were invited to participate, the total being 139: 66 Research scholars and 73 Travel scholars. The FNF's database of these participants and their email addresses were used to access the scholars. The researchers did not have access to the database – access was gained through the FNF office.

4.2 Data collection

The questionnaire developed by the research team was adapted, with permission, from one used previously in an evaluation of the FNF's Leadership scholarship programme (Giordano 2010). Therefore most questions had already been tried and tested with other FNF scholars. The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) comprised closed and free text questions in the following sections:

Section 1: Demographic and other relevant information

The questions asked for brief responses on the following: type of scholarship; scholar's role at the time that the scholarship commenced and now; highest level qualification; how long the scholar had been a registered nurse or midwife at the point the scholarship commenced; main activities conducted within the scholarship.

Section 2: The scholar's experience:

The questions used a Likert scale and free text response boxes. Likert scales are considered straightforward and versatile and respondents appreciate the consistent use of

the format throughout a questionnaire (Johns 2010). Lengthy questionnaires can be a disincentive to completion (Edwards et al 2007) so it was aimed to keep the questionnaire at a reasonable length. It is also suggested that questionnaires should be self-explanatory to complete and be mainly restricted to scaled closed questions (Fowler 2009). However, this questionnaire did include some open text questions in order to elicit more detail and explanation. The topic areas in the questionnaire were:

- Expectations of the scholarship
- Impact of the scholarship
- Dissemination of the scholarship work
- Impact on patient care/safety/experience and the scholar's profession
- Support from the Florence Nightingale Foundation
- Improving the scholarship programme
- Overall experience
- Promoting the scholarship

4.3 Data analysis

The quantitative data from the questions were analysed using descriptive statistics. The responses to the fixed response questions were analysed within SurveyMonkey, calculating frequencies and percentages. Quantitative responses to questions without fixed responses were imported into Excel and frequencies, percentages and means were calculated. For each question that invited free text comments, the free text comments were first read through to gain familiarity with the data and the emergent themes. SurveyMonkey's categorising function was then used to apply named 'categories' to each free text comment; where appropriate, more than one category was applied to respondents' pieces of free text. The categories were then displayed, and broader themes were developed to represent the larger number of categories. In the 'Results' sections, these broader themes will be presented with illustrative quotations.

4.4 Ethical considerations

London South Bank University Research Ethics Committee scrutinised the research proposal and study documents and gave permission for the survey to proceed. The FNF sent out an invitation email to the scholars from their database, with an information sheet attached and a link to the SurveyMonkey questionnaire. Scholars were informed that completion and submission of the questionnaire would be considered as implied consent to take part. The scholars had already completed their scholarships with the FNF and had no further contact with them so they should not have felt under any obligation to complete the survey. After two weeks a reminder email was sent. Respondents completed the questionnaire anonymously on SurveyMonkey. In the presentation of the results, care has been taken to avoid recognition of individuals in the quotations used to illustrate themes from the free text data.

5. Results

A total of 82 scholars responded, which was a response rate of 59%. Surveys carry a risk of a poor response rate (Newell 1996; Barriball et al. 1999) and can be as low as 30% (Oppenheim 1992) so this was considered an acceptable response rate.

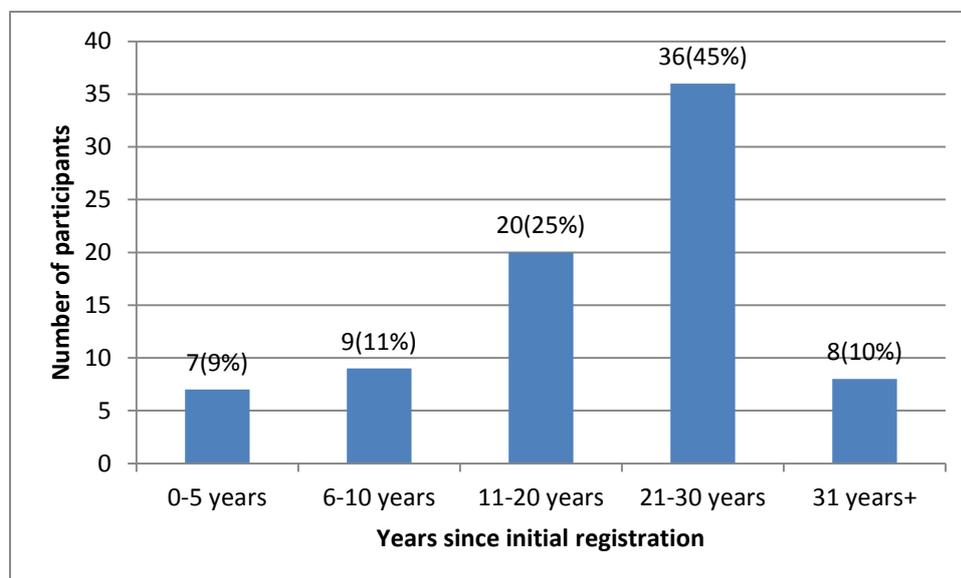
5.1 Profile of nurses and midwives who have been awarded Research and Travel scholarships

Of the scholars who completed the questionnaire, 34 (42%) were Research scholars and 48 (58%) were Travel scholars. The response rate for the Research scholars was 50% while the response rate for Travel scholars was 66%. Although the FNF database of scholars was as up-to-date as possible, it is possible that some scholars had changed their place of work and email addresses and, as their FNF scholarships were completed, they may not have informed the FNF of their new contact details. Therefore, some potential participants may not have received their invitations.

5.1.1 Years since initial professional registration

Eighty scholars answered this question. The number of years since initial professional registration ranged from 1 year to 38 years (see Figure 1). The mean was 20 years.

Figure 1: Years since initial registration, when the scholarship was awarded



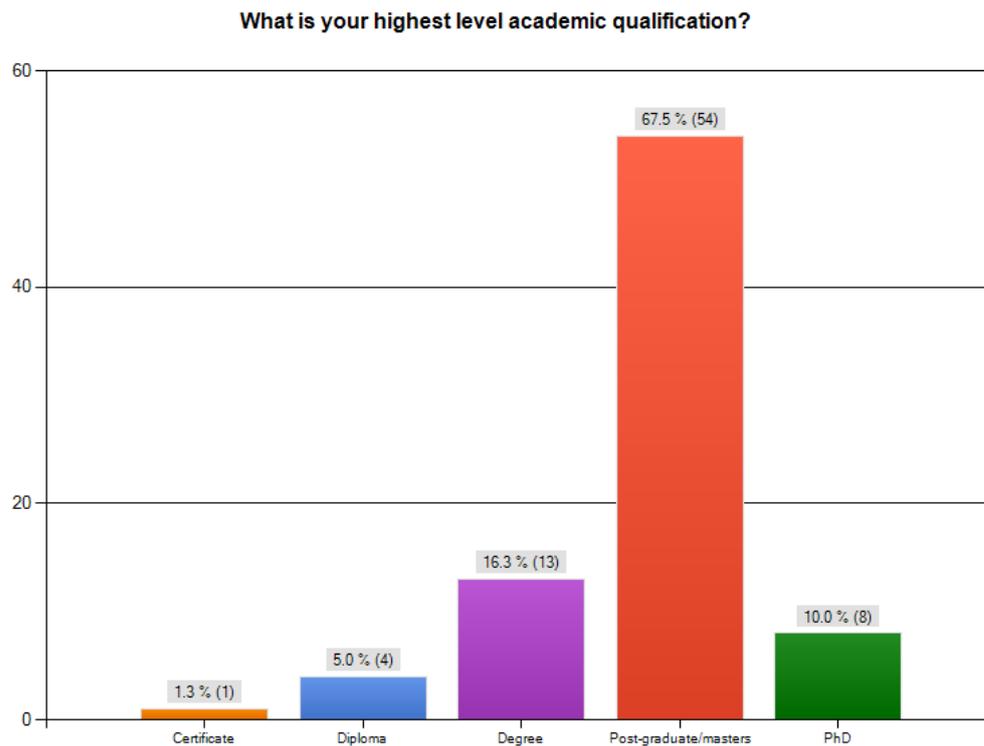
When comparing Research and Travel scholars, the mean number of years since initial professional registration was 5 years lower for Research scholars:

- 33 Research scholars responded; the number of years since initial professional registration ranged from 1 year to 34 years, with a mean of 17 years.
- 47 Travel scholars responded; the number of years since initial professional registration ranged from 2.5 years to 38 years, the mean being 23 years.

5.1.2 Highest level academic qualification

Eighty scholars answered this question; for the majority (67.5%; n=54), their highest level academic qualification was masters/post-graduate level and 8 (10%) had a PhD (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Highest level academic qualification



The Research and Travel scholars' highest level academic qualifications were very similar; see Figure 3 (Travel scholars) and Figure 4 (Research scholars) but a larger proportion of Travel scholars had a post-graduate/masters qualification (70.2%; n=33) than the Research scholars (63.6%; n=21).

Figure 3 Travel scholars: highest level academic qualification

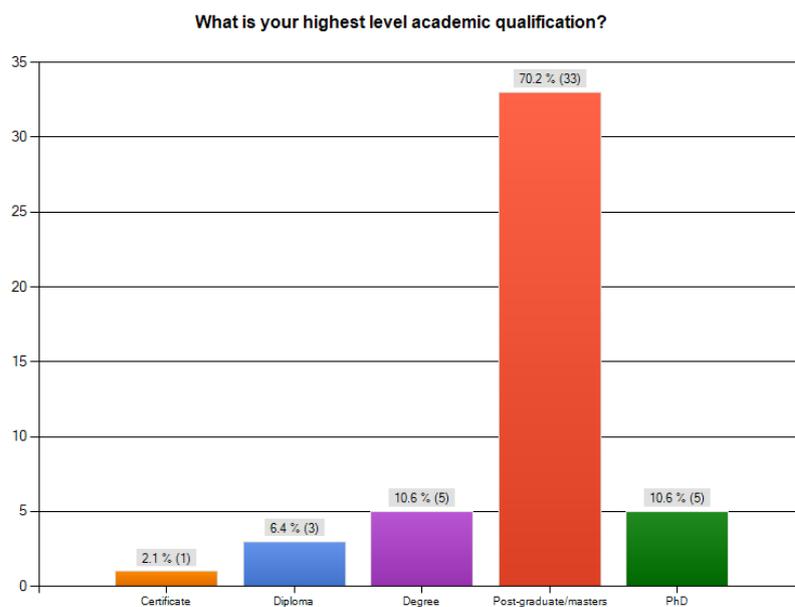
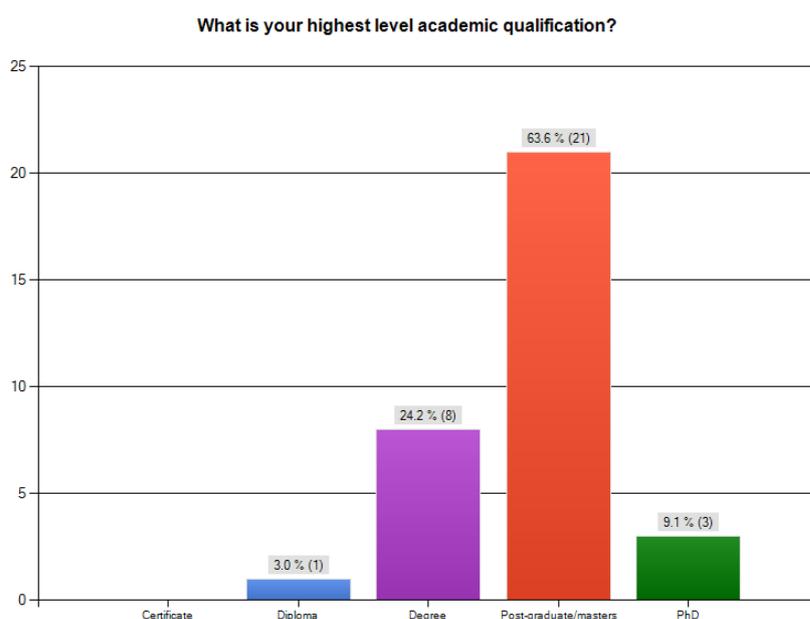


Figure 4 Research scholars: highest level academic qualification



5.1.3 Professional role

The respondents had the opportunity to provide information regarding their professional role in free text. The professional roles were categorised as: Education (Practice and/or Higher Education), Practitioner, Research/Research Nurse, Student, Executive Management, or Not Applicable (see Table 1).

Table 1 Overview of scholars' professional roles when their scholarships were awarded

Category	All (total n=82)	Research scholarship (total n=34)	Travel scholarship (total n=48)
Education (Practice and/or HE)	15% (n=13)	9% (n=3)	21% (n=10)
Practitioner	65% (n=54)	70% (n=24)	62% (n= 30)
Researcher/Research Nurse	8% (n=7)	15% (n=5)	4% (n=2)
Student	1% (n=1)	3% (n=1)	0
Executive Management	7% (n=6)	0	13% (n=6)
N/A	1% (n=1)	3% (n=1)	0

It is evident that the majority of the respondents had roles in practice as practitioners. Without jeopardising confidentiality and anonymity, the practitioner roles were varied across fields of practice (mental health, children and young people, adult, learning disability) with some midwifery respondents. The level at which the respondents were working ranged from staff nurse, to specialist nurses, to consultant nurses and team leaders.

Unsurprisingly the category of researcher/research nurse made up a higher percentage within the research scholarship respondents (15%) as opposed to the travel scholarship respondents (4%). The majority of those who stated that their professional role related to education were travel scholars (21%) with only 9% of research scholars citing this as their professional role. Another point which is worthy of note is that those within the category of Executive Management had all undertaken travel scholarships.

It is interesting to note that 45% (n=35) of the total number of respondents provided information that suggested that they had changed roles during, or following completion of, the scholarships. From the information provided it is not possible to determine whether the change in role for each individual was a progression or promotion. However, it seems likely that at least some of the role changes were promoted posts. Table 2 provides an overview of the numbers of respondents who stated that their role had changed and those who stated that their role had remained the same.

Table 2 Overview of respondents who had changed role since the award of their scholarship

Category	All (total n=82)	Research scholarship (total n=34)	Travel scholarship (total n=48)
As above	55% (n=45)	59% (n=20)	52% (n=25)
Role changed	43% (n=35)	38% (n=13)	46% (n=22)
N/A	1% (n=1)	3% (n=1)	0
Not answered	1% (n=1)	0	2% (n=1)

A higher percentage of those respondents who had completed a travel scholarship stated that they had changed role (46%), as opposed to 38% of the research scholars. As stated before, it is not possible to draw strong conclusions from the information as the responses cannot be attributed to individuals and comparisons cannot be made between role title for this question and that of question 2. However, there are indications that the scholarships are likely to have had at least some impact on respondents' career progression.

5.1.4 Key activities carried out within the scholarship

Travel scholarship

One of the respondents skipped this question.

Each of the respondents undertook the travel scholarship as a means of exploring relevant practice within different contexts. Scholars travelled internationally (to countries such as the

USA, Australia, Iceland, Sweden, South Africa and Canada) (n=34). Other scholars travelled within the UK only (n=8), with some of the respondents indicating that they travelled both within the UK and internationally (n=4). (One of the respondents did not indicate whether their travel scholarship had been taken in the UK or internationally).

The range of practice areas that were explored was wide. The following quotes give some indication of the scope of the projects that were undertaken (the specific places have been anonymised, though the countries have been named):

Visit to [cancer centre in US] meeting with executive and clinical staff, attending patient and carer meetings to examine best practice and evidence in Dignified Care.

Visit to several centres in Canada to understand what makes for successful health/nursing interventions for men.

Visit Australia to explore the use of human rights legislation to reduce restrictive practices in services for people with intellectual disability.

The purpose of the travel scholarship was to study the effects of domestic violence on infant mental health [in Australia].

Visited Australia and Sweden to observe the physical environments where older people receive care in the last year of life.

Travel to the USA to look at how hospitals encourage their nurses to utilise evidence-based practice.

What is so interesting is to look at the wide range of activities that were undertaken with the implicit assumption that practice in their own areas would benefit from the comparative and exploratory work that the scholars had undertaken.

Research scholarship

One respondent stated 'not applicable' for this question.

A total of 14 respondents identified that they had used the scholarship funding to undertake specific research modules. These contributed to the achievement of degree or Masters awards. Four respondents had used the funding to undertake research studies, with a further 8 people stating that they had undertaken both theoretical module-based learning alongside the completion of research associated with either a Masters degree or doctorate. Four people stated that they had undertaken training related to their PhD (though not modular learning). Three more respondents had completed literature reviews. To give a flavour of the kinds of activities that the respondents undertook, the following quotes highlight some of these activities:

Second year of PhD studies exploring the impact of frontotemporal dementia upon intergenerational families. Carried out research modules.

Evidence-based literature review and critical analysis. Attempts to apply this to personal and local practice by dissemination of the evidence.

Research study investigating how mental health service users make sense of Community Treatment Orders.

The scholarship allowed me to embark on an MRes in Mental Health Research.

5.2 Scholars' expectations of their scholarships and their overall experiences

5.2.1 Expectations prior to commencing the scholarship

Out of the total potential respondents, 80 people completed this survey question (2 of the travel scholars chose not to answer the question).

A few of the scholars indicated that they did not have any expectations of the scholarship at the time of application. Many of the respondents cited that their expectation of the scholarship was to receive funding associated with the scholarship which would enable them to gain knowledge and 'give back' to practice and the profession through the application of that knowledge. In addition, some of the respondents cited expectations that they had of the Foundation, or expectations that they believed the Foundation had of the scholar. The development of networks came through as an expectation for some of the scholars. Finally, a few of the respondents noted the professional development that they expected through completion of the scholarship activities. Many of the respondents indicated that they had expectations related to more than one of the areas cited.

No expectations

Those who indicated that they had no expectations related this to their belief that they were unlikely to be successful in achieving the scholarship. Five of the Travel scholars and three of the Research scholars were quite clear that they did not expect to be successful.

Not overly hopeful that my application would be successful as it is such a good opportunity and there are few around like it.

I did not have a lot of expectations when I applied as I did not know if I would get the scholarship. When I did get the scholarship I was absolutely thrilled.

I did not expect to be awarded a scholarship as I thought there would be a lot of applicants with research proposals of a very high standard.

Knowledge and 'giving back'

Most of the respondents cited that their main expectation at application was to gain knowledge through either their travel or research which would then enable them to 'give back' to practice and/or their profession through the application of that knowledge (or the skills) in practice. While this was an expectation, there was nothing to indicate that the individuals felt that they would *definitely* be offered the scholarship; just that if they were successful at application that they would then have the opportunity to take forward their travel or research projects. The Research scholars were more likely to refer to the funding received through the scholarship than the Travel scholars, whereas the Travel scholars were more likely to refer to the impact on practice of the scholarship and the associated activities:

I had previously had a scholarship through the Foundation, and it had really enhanced my practice in the UK, so I was expecting to learn a lot, and acquire new skills and knowledge that could be adapted in the UK [...] It was very important to me that through the scholarship I would be able to bring something valuable back to the UK.

My expectations were that I would gain knowledge and be able to see first-hand what the key elements were that enabled the mental health needs of young people to be met. By choosing the services identified in the literature and other searches I hoped to be able to

gather good intelligence that would then enable me to promote such good practice both in my own employment and across the UK through various networks.

To gain funding for my research interests and development. To enable to systematically use my nursing experience to further patient care.

I was hoping to receive some financial support for the cost of the dissertation module but had no expectations that I would be successful as it was made clear that there were many applicants.

Expectations related to the Florence Nightingale Foundation

A number of respondents highlighted their expectations of the Florence Nightingale Foundation, and the associated expectations that the FNF had of the scholars. In the main, these were viewed as positive aspects of the process of undertaking the scholarship, with those who mentioned these expectations having a realistic understanding of the FNF expectations and appearing ready and willing to take these on as part of the scholarship. Both Travel and Research scholars conveyed these expectations with perhaps more of an emphasis on the expectations that scholars had of the FNF within the Research scholar respondents. The following quotes illustrate the overall expectations across the scholarships:

Advice and support. Opportunity to receive mentorship. Funding of travel scholarship. Sharing of the learning.

To commit to the study proposal, research and plan the travel with expected outcomes. Ensure personal and professional time to meet the objectives. Travel internationally and maintain the excellent reputation of the FNF. Complete the study proposal and write up. Publish study findings, present and network.

Thorough analysis of why I was applying for a research scholarship at interview. Intermittent requests for updates regarding the progress of the research. Clear guidance regarding the required reports and recommendations for practice. Feedback regarding the reports submitted.

Networks

Some of the respondents noted that they expected to develop their networks through participation in the scholarship – either from the perspective of the contacts through the FNF or from the activities associated with the scholarship itself. Only one Research scholar highlighted networking opportunities, while a number of the Travel scholars mentioned this (and implicit within many of the comments made in relation to travel was the opportunity to work and learn from other people):

I was hoping to gain the support of the Foundation to investigate how long-term care facilities in Canada implement the evidence-base for stroke. I was also interested in how this was being managed in the UK and was hoping for some contacts.

Networking with like-minded professionals.

To feel part of a community of nurses who were learning to move forward the profession.

Professional development

Implicit within many of the comments made by the respondents was the expectation that they would develop professionally. The overlap between professional development and the knowledge/‘giving back’ is evident, but it is worth highlighting some of the specific comments made regarding respondents’ development:

To enhance my professional development through experiencing different care cultures.

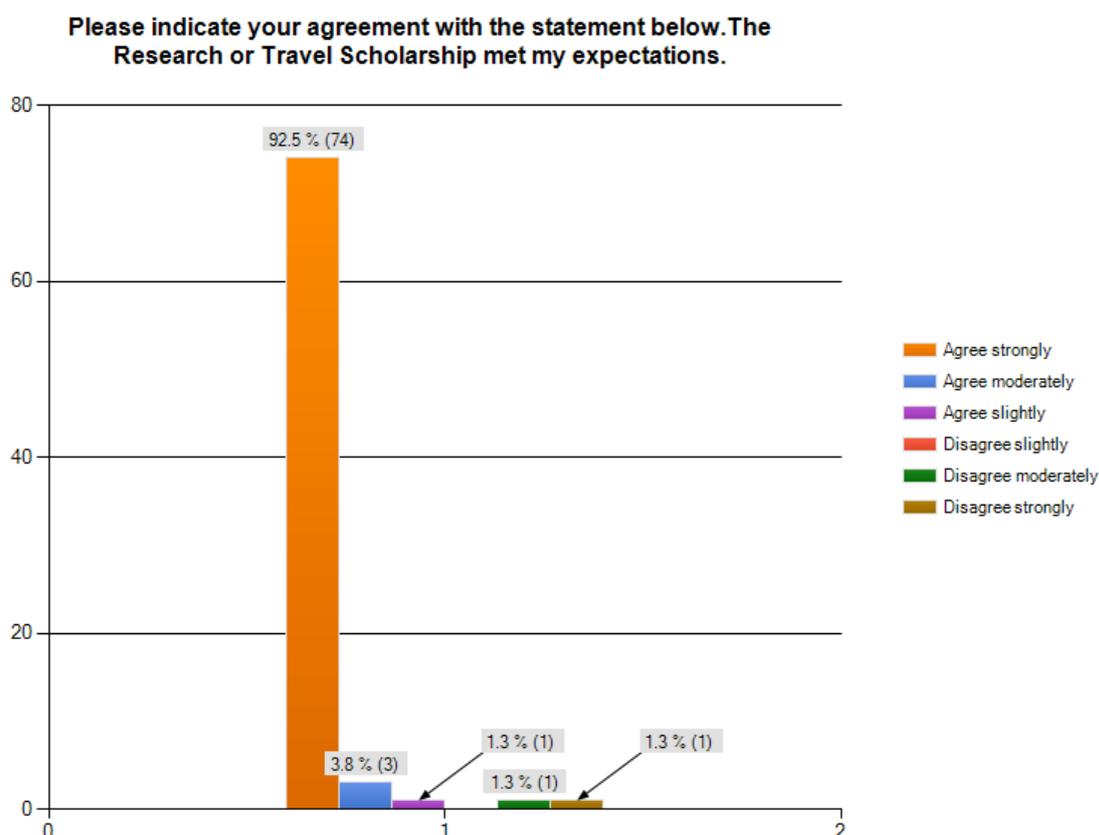
To demonstrate to myself and others that I could put a proposal together and secure funding.

I expected to gain more knowledge and confidence.

5.2.2 Whether the scholarship met scholars' expectations

Of the respondents to the question asking whether the scholarship met their expectations, 74 (92.5%) strongly agreed that it did so and the other six scholars gave varied responses (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 The Research or Travel Scholarship met my expectations



Of the 46 Travel scholars who responded, 44 (95.7%) agreed strongly and the other 2 agreed moderately that the scholarship met their expectations. Of the 34 Research scholars, 30 (88.2%) agreed strongly that the scholarship met their expectations, 1 agreed moderately, 1 agreed slightly, 1 disagreed moderately and 1 disagreed strongly. Scholars were invited to write comments and of the 43 respondents, 12 stated that the scholarship had exceeded their expectations, for example:

I gained far more than I anticipated. To meet people and have time for discussion was wonderful. It was most useful to hear that even on the other side of the planet the problems were very similar. Having seen how similar institutions function, the scholarship has given

me the confidence to make decisions that I know are right as I have a benchmark, which I previously did not have.

Many others wrote positively about the opportunity that the scholarship had provided them with, for example:

It is such a great opportunity to travel and share best practice with colleagues around the world. It has opened many doors and provided me with the opportunity to share my experience and learning from the scholarship locally, regionally and nationally.

Other scholars wrote explicitly about their enhanced knowledge as a result of the scholarship:

The experience of the scholarship was so powerful personally and professionally that it cannot be put into words. The learning that I engaged in whilst undertaking the study transformed my understanding, knowledge and skills.

There were some comments from scholars about the high level of support they had experienced from the FNF:

Thank you for the swift email responses when communicating with the Florence Nightingale Foundation office. The staff were always very helpful and supportive.

Others expressed gratitude that the scholarship had enabled them to achieve their aims:

I was very grateful for the financial help received and could not have completed my studies without the assistance.

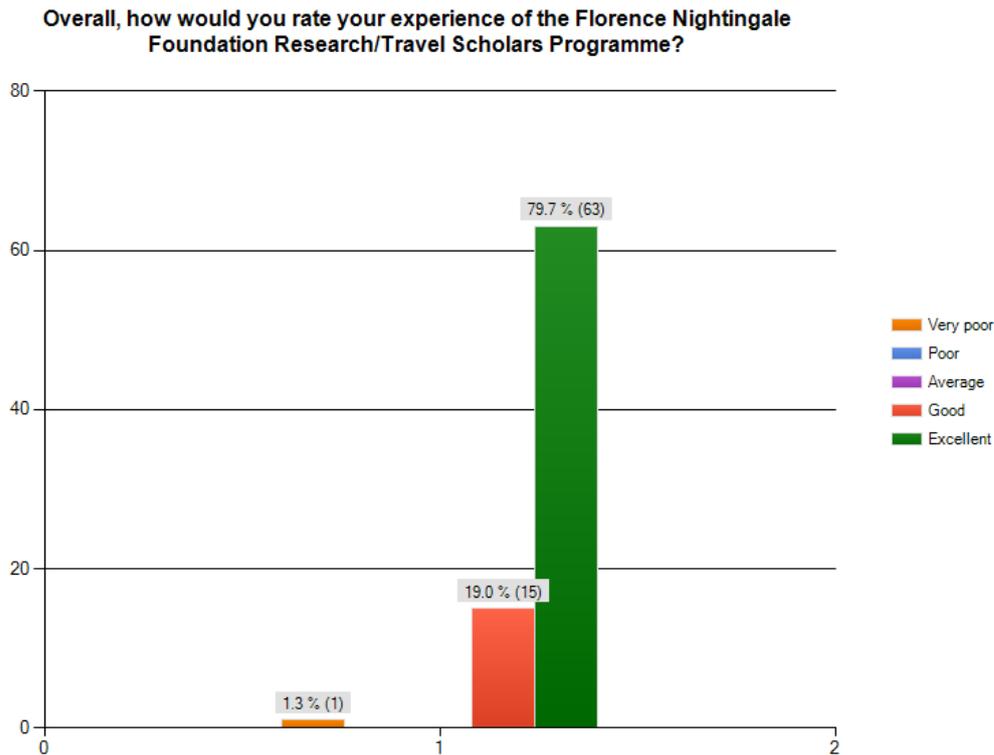
There were various other comments, including a suggestion that the FNF should be more flexible in how the scholarship funding was spent, a view that the scholarship report expectations were excessive, and a comment about dissemination being more difficult than expected. One scholar expressed that the prestige of the scholarship meant that their study findings were taken more seriously by colleagues and other organisations.

5.2.4 Overall experience

Scholars were asked to give an overall rating of their experience of their scholarship. Overwhelmingly, most scholars were very positive about the experience though more Travel scholars rated the experience as 'excellent' than did Research scholars. Of the overall 79 scholars who responded, 63 (79.7%) rated the experience as 'excellent', 15 (19%) as 'good' and one scholar rated the experience as 'very poor' (see Figure 6). Of the 45 Travel scholars who responded, 41 (91.1%) rated the experience as 'excellent' and the other 4 (9.1%) as 'good'. There were 34 Research scholars who responded; 22 (64.7%) rated the experience as 'excellent', 11 (32.4%) as 'good' and one scholar as 'very poor'.

Open comments were invited and 45 scholars responded; comments fell into two main categories: appreciation for the opportunity and support received, and feelings about the experience.

Figure 6 Overall experience



Appreciation for the opportunity and support received

Many scholars' comments expressed gratitude or appreciation for the opportunity offered by the scholarship they had been awarded and these often referred to support from the FNF:

I am very appreciative of the support and encouragement I have received

I shall always be very grateful for the wonderful opportunity.

I think I have been incredibly fortunate to have been granted the scholarship, and feel it has opened my mind

I would like to thank everybody at the Florence Nightingale Foundation and the [other named Trust] who supported me while I undertook my project.

Excellent support from friendly, approachable professionals, who made me feel that my research was valued.

Thank you for your support and guidance through the whole process

Am very indebted to the FNF and my sponsor - the grant allowed me to develop.

Fantastic experience - the opportunity to see at first-hand how other countries operate. The ability to engage with strategic leadership outside our own 'bubble' was invaluable.

I could describe the scholarship as a vehicle through which much learning has taken place for both me and my organisation.

The efficiency of the scholarship award process was specifically mentioned by some scholars:

I was informed of every step I need to take, including reminders of when I submitted reports etc.

The admin support was efficient and helpful (when organising transfer of money etc.).

Some scholars referred to the personal nature of the support from the FNF; there was appreciation expressed that they received a personalised letter each time they submitted a report and there was a reference to feeling part of a community by being an FNF scholar. There were also some specific comments about the professionalism of the FNF staff: 'Professional yet personal', 'Good supportive Professional Staff', and:

I can't fault the professional way in which the whole award was dealt with from beginning to completion.

Another scholar commented that it was:

Great to still be invited to events such as the certificate award ceremony and the foundation yearly event.

There was appreciation for the application and interview process expressed too:

The panel interview to begin with was daunting but fair.

I felt like they were giving me an opportunity to achieve a personal and professional goal. At the presentation and interviews I felt part of a nursing community with the same things in common.

I even found the process of applying and talking with other scholars at the outset fascinating.

Very enjoyable, interesting programme. I include the interview process in that. The professionals listened to my ideas and supported my enthusiasm and enjoyment of my topic and the need to further develop my knowledge.

One scholar, however, considered that specific questions asked at interview about their research to be undertaken for their dissertation module were difficult to answer, as the study proposal had not yet been agreed with the university.

One scholar commented that the pressure to submit the report to the FNF coincided with the submission of the work for the module undertaken for the scholarship. There was a suggestion that further on-going support from the FNF 'could have been fruitful for both parties' and one scholar suggested that:

If scholars are struggling to make progress there should be a clear support structure in place to help them to accomplish publication & sharing as widely as possible.

Several scholars commented that they would recommend the FNF scholarship opportunity to others:

This was an unexpectedly enriching experience and I would recommend anyone with an idea they would like to develop to apply

An opportunity which I would encourage others to pursue.

Feelings about the experience

Many scholars wrote enthusiastic remarks about the experience, using words such as: 'wonderful', 'excellent', 'marvellous', 'amazing', 'a privilege' 'very impressed', 'fantastic', 'enriching' and 'inspiring'. One scholar simply wrote 'Best thing ever!!!' and another wrote 'Loved it'. Examples of comments included:

Words cannot do justice to expressing how amazing the whole experience has been.

I am passionate about nursing. Being awarded the scholarship has reinforced this. I am proud to have had the opportunity to undertake this work with support from the Foundation.

My life personally and professionally will never be the same again! The people I met have inspired me.

The scholarship experience has greatly enhanced me and my work, in such a short time.

Very positive experience for my personal and professional development.

Absolutely fantastic, one of the best of my life, personally and professionally.

One scholar commented however that the scholarship experience was 'Disappointing'.

5.3 Scholars' perceptions of the impact of their scholarships

5.3.1 Impact of the scholarship on career

Of the 80 scholars who responded, 43 (53.8%) strongly agreed that the scholarship had had a positive influence on their career, a further 26 (32.5%) agreed moderately and the remaining 11 scholars (13.8%) agreed slightly (see Figure 7). On examining the Travel and Research scholars' responses separately there was little difference. The Travel scholars' responses were: 24 (52.2%) agreed strongly; 15 (32.6%) agreed moderately; 7 (15.2%) agreed slightly. The Research scholars' responses were: 19 (55.9%) strongly agreed; 11 (32.4%) moderately agreed; 4 (11.8%) slightly agreed.

Comments were invited and 71 scholars wrote comments, which related to: confidence, enhanced skills and knowledge, dissemination activities, career development, future developments, and increased profile.

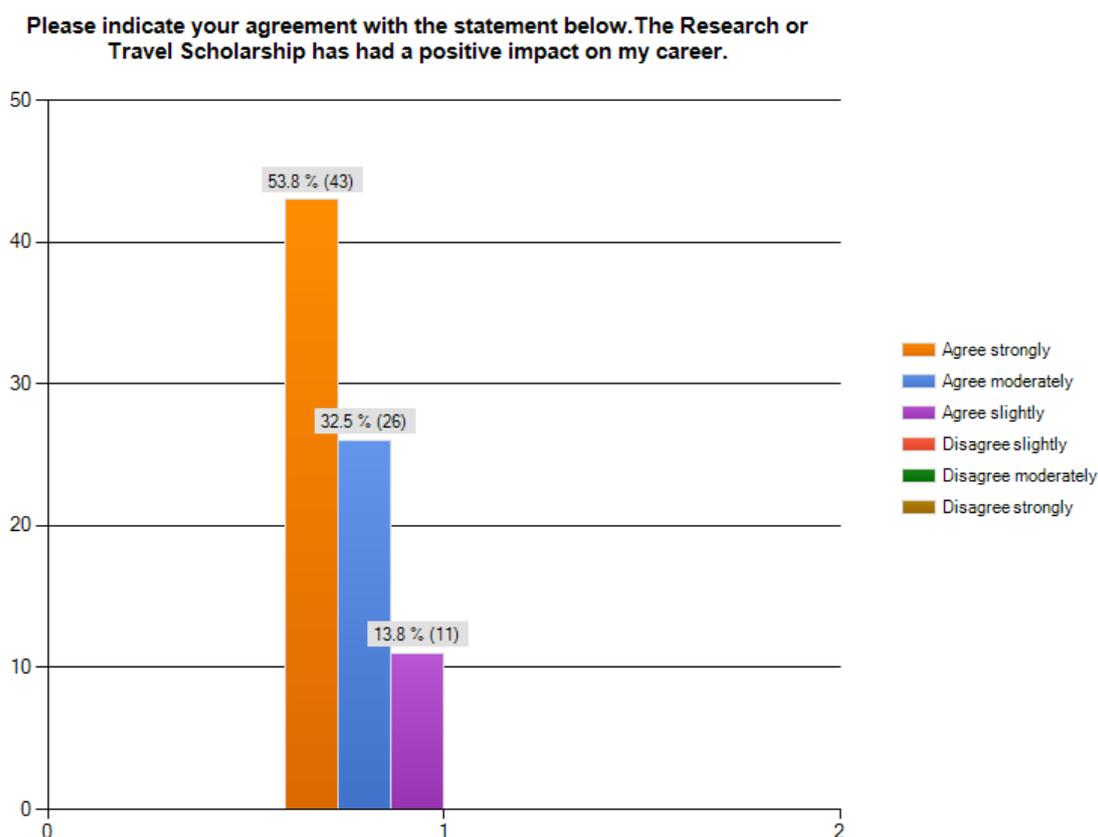
Confidence

Many scholars wrote about their increased confidence that had developed due to the scholarship, for example:

I undertook study that I would have been unable to do without the funding from the scholarship. This has provided me with skills and more importantly a confidence in my work. The biggest effect of the scholarship is a sense that what I am doing is worthwhile and that nursing research endeavours are valued, this has probably helped to keep up my enthusiasm.

I have gained confidence and skills in communication, persuasion and negotiation since I started this scholarship. More people seem to listen to me with interest and respect.

Figure 7 The Research or Travel scholarship has had a positive impact on my career



Dissemination activities

Scholars referred to ways that they had disseminated work resulting from their scholarships, locally and/or through publications and national or international conferences; these responses inferred that these dissemination activities had had, or would have, a positive impact on their careers.

Career development

A number of scholars wrote that their career had already changed due to the scholarship and others expressed that they expected or hoped for a career change resulting from the scholarship in the future. For some scholars, this was because the scholarship had supported the attainment of further qualifications. For other scholars, the gaining of the scholarship had in itself helped secure a new position:

My new employers were very impressed that I had been awarded the prestigious research scholarship. It helped me to be offered the job!

Future developments

Some scholars detailed further work that they had been involved in following on from the scholarship, for example, practice developments, setting up specialist interest groups and developing collaborative funding applications, related to the scholarship work.

Increased profile

Several scholars considered that their own profile had increased following award of the scholarship, for example:

It has most definitely uplifted my profile within my organisation and led me to be considered for involvement in work that perhaps I wouldn't have been previously.

Miscellaneous

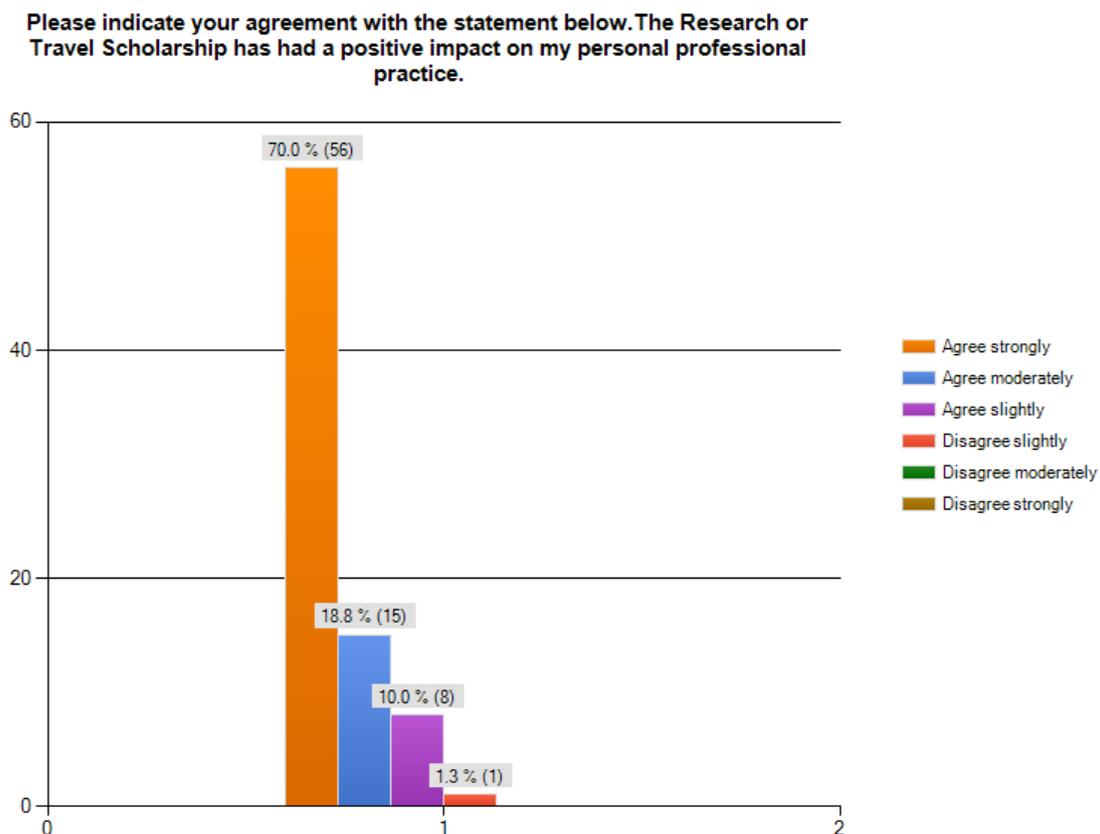
A few Scholars wrote a variety of other comments, including that it was too early to comment, that they were unsure, or general positive comments, for example:

The award has been one of the most life-changing and precious times I could ever ask for.

5.3.2 Impact of the scholarship on personal, professional practice

Of the 80 scholars who responded, 56 (70%) agreed strongly that the scholarship had had a positive impact on their personal professional practice, 15 (18.8%) agreed moderately, 10 (8%) agreed slightly, and 1 (1.3%) disagreed slightly (see Figure 8). A higher percentage of Travel scholars agreed strongly with this statement than Research scholars. Of the 46 Travel scholars who responded, 34 (73.9%) agreed strongly that the scholarship had had a positive impact on their personal professional practice, 9 (19.6%) agreed moderately and 3 (6.5%) agreed slightly. There were 34 Research scholars who responded; 22 (64.7%) agreed strongly, 6 (17.6%) agreed moderately, 5 (14.7%) agreed slightly and one (2.9%) disagreed slightly.

Figure 8 The Research or Travel scholarship has had a positive impact on my personal professional practice



Comments were invited and 56 scholars made comments; these are presented thematically.

New understanding and perspectives

There were many comments about scholars' development of new understanding and perspectives that influenced their practice:

I have a greater understanding of research and a higher appreciation for how it influences my own practice as well my colleagues.

A number of these comments were linked to experiences gleaned through travel and the opportunity to visit centres of excellence and talk to other practitioners:

It has been very informative and an amazing opportunity to be able to discuss pain management with so many practitioners.

I gained a valuable insight into the nursing practice in the two countries, and I have been able to apply some of this when working with patients.

There were also comments about how the scholars' understanding of their area of clinical practice had improved through research. Some scholars referred to how they had disseminated their learning and others referred to further study they were undertaking to continue their learning. There were also some comments about scholars challenging themselves about practice as a result of these new perspectives:

The opportunity afforded to me through the scholarship has encouraged me to think well beyond my boundaries and challenge the current system.

The scholarship allowed me to look at things differently and have a deeper appreciation for the choices I have as a clinician.

The experiences during my travel scholarship, and learning about best practice from centres of excellence has both informed me, and challenged me about my own professional practice.

Improved practice

A number of scholars expressed that their own practice had improved as a result of their scholarship, and there were examples of wider improvements too:

I have made some changes to my own clinical practice in how I provide support.

The changes we are making to the processes in the organisation as a result of my scholarship will enable staff to reach a higher and more meaningful level of patient and family inclusion in their care and treatment.

Evidence-based practice

Some scholars referred to application of evidence to practice:

I am better able to understand the research that is presented to me. I can also better search for papers, write articles and presentations that are evidence based with current knowledge.

In some instances, scholars referred to applying their own research or other project work being applied to clinical practice:

I have been able to apply my research findings to my own practice, and to the practice of many of my colleagues.

As I conducted research within my area of specialty the findings are applicable to practice which has had a definite impact.

Improved confidence

Some scholars responded that their personal professional practice had improved through their increased confidence, for example:

It has enabled me to have greater confidence in my knowledge and the application of this knowledge to practice.

It has given me more confidence which has been highlighted by people I have worked and studied with.

This has made a major difference to my confidence levels and so to my work with others.

Leadership and collaboration

A few scholars commented that the scholarship had highlighted the importance of leading changes in practice and collaborating with others to improve practice:

It has made me consider how much better we could do things, and personally how important it is to take forward ideas and initiatives, rather than waiting for someone else to take the lead. It has made me feel it is possible.

5.3.3 Impact of the scholarship on their profession or colleagues

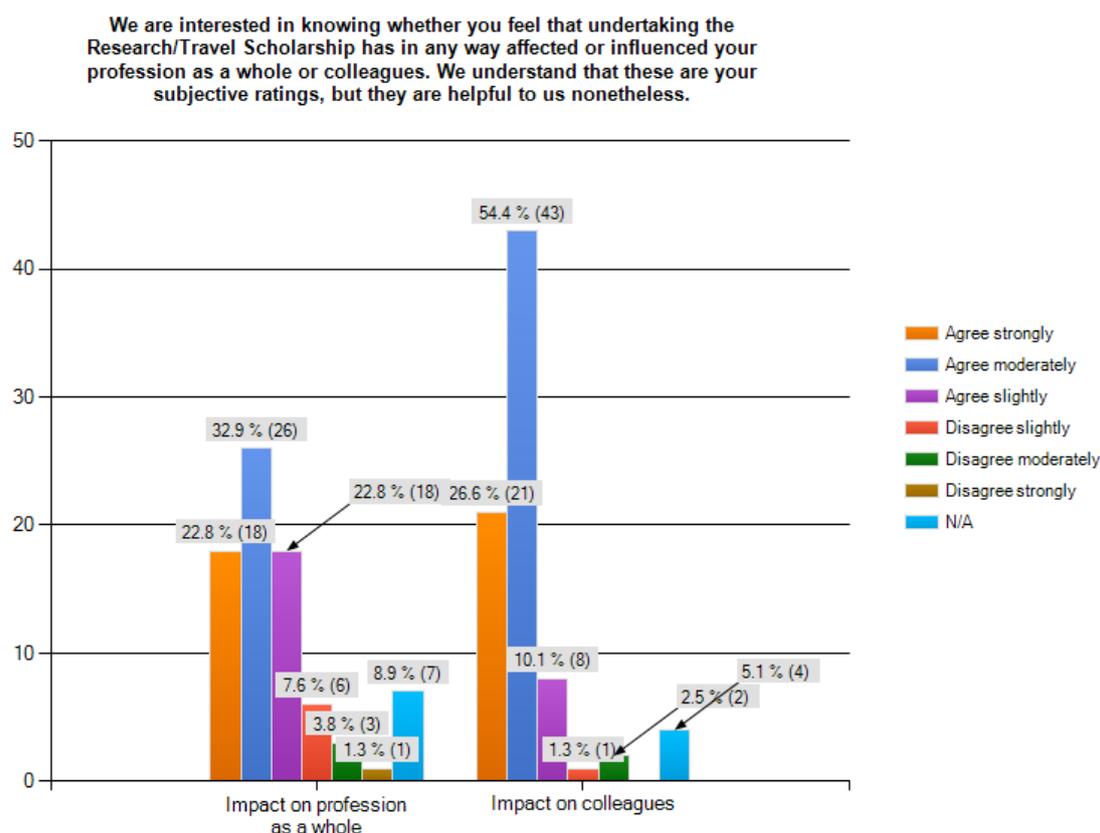
There was a mixed response from the 74 scholars who responded to the question about the impact of their scholarship on their profession as a whole or on their colleagues (see Figure 9). A much higher proportion of scholars agreed strongly or moderately that their scholarship had impacted on their colleagues (i.e. local impact) than had impacted on the profession as a whole. However, the open comments indicated that some considered that wider impact on the profession would happen later, as a result of dissemination activities, for example:

It has had an impact on colleagues as I am sharing best practice and they are involved in some of the training initiatives with me. I think that it will have a wider impact on the profession as the role of the research nurse is better understood, but this will continue to be a piece of work that needs taking forward.

A small number of scholars considered that the scholarship had not impacted on colleagues or their profession, or responded that the question was not applicable to them. Again, the open comments clarified some of these responses, for example, some considered that it was too early to have impact but believed there would be impact later. There was little difference between the responses of Travel scholars and Research scholars to this question.

Scholars were invited to write explanatory responses regarding impact on their colleagues or the profession. Their comments reflected the diversity of their scholarship work; while some types of projects were able to impact quickly, others would take longer due to the change management required.

Figure 9 Impact on profession or colleagues



Impact on colleagues

A number of scholars' comments explained that their scholarship had directly impacted on colleagues and there were three main ways: impact on their colleagues' practice and understanding, impact on their team's profile, and inspiring their colleagues to apply for a scholarship themselves. There was one comment that a negative impact was that the team had to cover for the scholar's absence while they were travelling. Examples of impact on practice and understanding included: improved safeguarding knowledge and communication between other professional agencies, greater recognition of early intervention to prevent mental health problem development, collaborative developments with colleagues regarding dementia education, standardised training for healthcare support workers, use of a shared decision-making tool, and improved understanding of evidence-based practice amongst colleagues. Some comments specifically related to how the research conducted had impacted on the team's practice:

The research findings have given professionals an insight into patients' perspectives of their condition and the impact it has on their exercise capabilities. This has enabled us to adapt our education to set realistic goals for patients.

The findings of the research have been disseminated across the unit in which I work and are in the process of being disseminated across the Trust. Recommendations to improve the safety of the staff working within violent and aggressive settings have been addressed, and in particular recommendations for post incident support have been made and implemented.

Several examples of impact on colleagues' practice were as a result of dissemination activities, for example, presentations and education:

I believe my presentation has encouraged all clinicians to adapt their practice and reflect on the Patient experience.

My learning has allowed me to have in depth discussions with colleagues about new and existing evidence in care. It has also enhanced my teaching of students in the clinical area in the same way.

The service providers who contributed their thoughts and other colleagues who have read my report were all pleased to have been given a voice in a sea of criticism and felt it expressed their difficulties well.

Disseminating my research findings among obstetric and midwifery colleagues has enabled adjustments to be made in an attempt to improve patient care.

[My] presentation appears to resonate with those who hear it and they are challenged in relation to their practice.

I would like to think that through the various ways I have presented my findings there has been some small impact on others. Anecdotal feedback would suggest this is the case.

I am now able to share my skills with them [colleagues] and discuss DV [domestic violence] effects in supervision sessions. The presentation to GP commissioners will hopefully change the practice of primary care in [named city]. I am also able to use my knowledge during training and updates on the effects of trauma on baby brain development.

Some scholars believed that gaining a scholarship had improved their team's profile:

My colleagues were supportive and it was acknowledged it was a good reflection on the professionalism of the team to undertake the scholarship.

My department also now has an increased profile so colleagues have benefited.

I believe that the Scholarship did have a positive impact on my colleagues, as there was a sense of great pride when I received the award. Several colleagues have gone on to undertake further study and I hope I was able to act as a role model for them.

A number of scholars had encouraged colleagues to apply for a scholarship, in order to have the opportunities that they had gained personally while others had inspired colleagues to undertake further study:

I have also suggested the FN Foundation frequently to colleagues wishing to undertake study but unable to afford it.

For my own colleagues I think seeing a colleague get a scholarship encouraged them to think that maybe they could get one

I've spoken about my experiences widely, and have known at least 2 other people local to me who have applied (one was successful), so there can be a positive impact on colleagues.

I have been able to advise colleagues to take up the opportunity of becoming involved with the Foundation, stressing the support not just financial but professional.

I feel that dissemination of my study tour findings within my work environment has highlighted the benefits of networking and engaging with other professionals on a national

and international scale. It has also encouraged colleagues to consider applying for scholarships.

Now three other nurses in the unit are undertaking educational courses which I have helped them organise and apply for.

I think it heightened awareness of the scholarship to other nurses in my field. I am of the opinion that learning disability nurses view themselves as a devalued part of the profession and for that reason they may not readily identify the scholarships as a route for them to take in supporting their career.

I encourage nurse leaders to apply - share my experience and the opportunity to reflect in what is a very challenging role.

Since I received and completed my research scholarship, colleagues have realised that it is possible to apply and be successful - it has increased nursing morale. Some colleagues have since applied and been successful.

Impact on the profession as a whole

Comments relating to the profession as a whole often concerned developments at an early stage that were building on the scholarship, for example, one scholar wrote of the international collaborative research bid following on from their scholarship, which would in due course impact on nursing and other professions too. Other scholars wrote of the potential wider contribution thus:

My study was small and exploratory yet I think it might be an important additional contributor to a very big debate about compassion in nursing.

The project has put the topic on the research and the clinical agenda.

Other scholars referred to publications and presentations, that they expected had, or would have, a wider impact:

If my research findings are published, they may have an impact on the profession as a whole since they would be available to a wider range of healthcare professionals.

[My] learning from the travel scholarship is disseminated both directly (through papers/presentations) and less directly (through things such as the international visits that have resulted from this) in ways that ripple and impact on the profession and professional colleagues.

This 'ripple' effect of scholarships, and their impact beyond the individual, was also illustrated by the following comment:

The ability for nursing as a profession to avail of scholarships is vitally important. Whilst large scale organisational or practice change may result from only a few scholarships, the personal professional confidence that every scholar takes away will impact long after the initial scholarship and the capacity to develop leaders that have patient safety, quality and experience at the heart of their everyday practice should not be underestimated.

There was also comment that the scholarships in themselves raised the profile of nursing as a profession, and in the UK specifically, and also enhanced nursing's academic credibility:

I think the fact that this is a Florence Nightingale Foundation travel scholarship brings a high amount of esteem and recognition to the actual scholarship activity. It reminds the public that nurses have a high commitment to improving patient care, and to research and study. It emphasises that nurses are committed, and strive for excellence.

People across the professions have heard of the FNF Scholarships therefore this brings kudos to you and your organisation. I was invited onto BBC radio to talk about my Scholarship which gave fantastic coverage and boosts for my current organisation, nursing and the FNF.

Enhances the soul and vocation of nursing.

I think nurses undertaking research is beneficial to the profession as a whole and a plus for the academic side of the nursing profession.

Visiting the US I hope to have made a positive impression on nursing in the UK as I was aware I was also an ambassador for my profession

There was also reference to the award leading to the scholars' promotion of nursing as a profession:

It has made me a proud advocate of the nursing profession.

Reasons for lack of impact

Some scholars wrote comments explaining why impact had not been possible. One example related to Trust change management processes preventing the scholar's work being implemented. Other comments related to it being too early for the scholarship to have had an impact:

I think it has had very little impact on the profession due to the stage of the project.

The research is still in its early stages and therefore the impact is, as yet, limited.

Some scholars wrote comments to explain that although impact was limited so far, they expected there would be future impact, for example:

Until we have the action plan fully implemented it is difficult to determine the impact on the organisation or colleagues. However, as the action plan is a corporate plan supported by the Trust Board then it is anticipated that the impact should be significant when we have implemented the plan.

The travel scholarship has not had an impact on my profession as a whole. However I expect that over time there will be an impact.

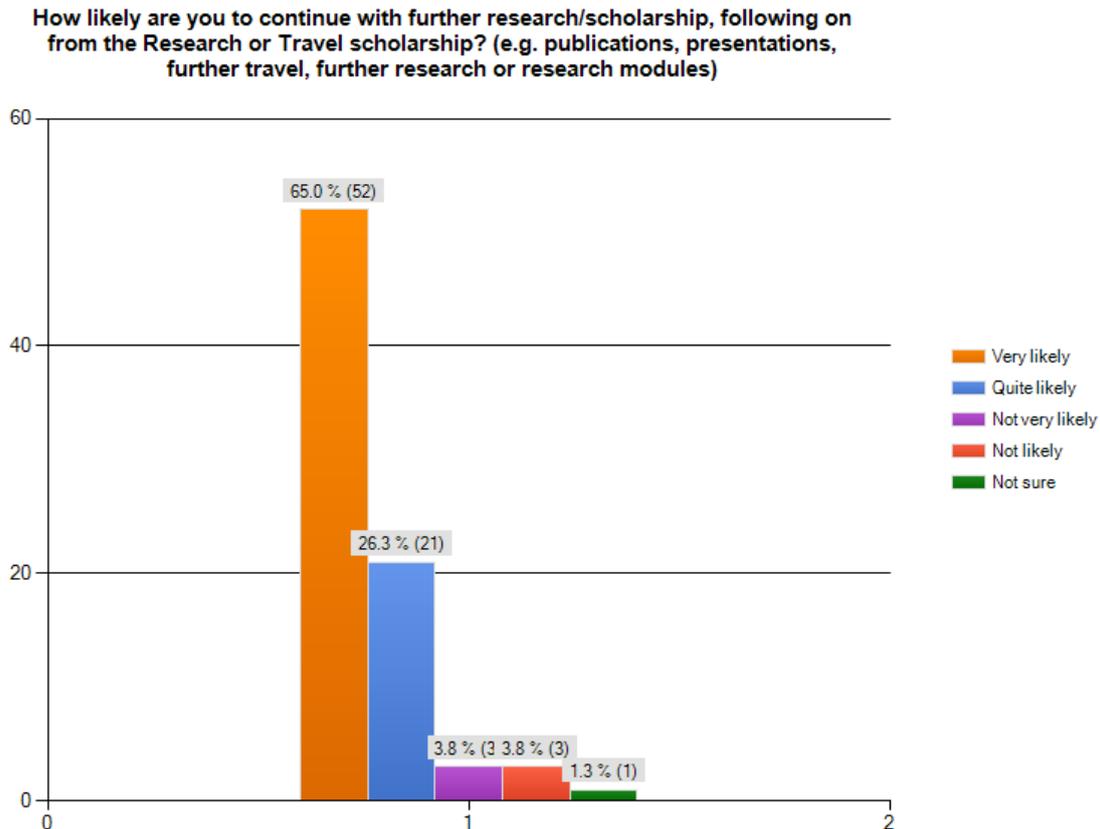
5.3.4 Likelihood of continuing with further research or scholarship

Scholars were asked how likely they were to continue with further research/scholarship, following on from their scholarship. Of the 80 scholars who responded, 52 (65%) responded that they were very likely to continue and 21 (26.3%) that they were quite likely, while three (3.8%) responded that they were not very likely, a further three (3.8%) responded that they were not likely and one (1.3%) that they were unsure (see Figure 10). Of the 46 Travel scholars who responded, 31 (67.4%) replied that they were very likely to continue with further research/scholarship, 12 (26.1%) replied that they were quite likely, one (2.2%) that they were not very likely and two (4.3%): not likely at all. Of the 34 Research scholars who replied, a slightly lower proportion considered that they were very likely to continue with further research/scholarship while 9 (26.5%) responded that they were quite likely. The remaining Research scholars responded: not very likely: 2 (5.9%); not likely: 1 (2.9%); not sure: 1 (2.9%).

Scholars were invited to summarise any plans for further research or scholarship in free text and 59 responded. Their plans were categorised as follows:

- Publications: 28
- Presentations: 23
- Further study (masters or doctoral): 18
- Research/audit plans: 11
- Further scholarship applications: 9
- Research funding applications: 5
- Continued networking: 3

Figure 10 Likelihood of continuing with further research or scholarship



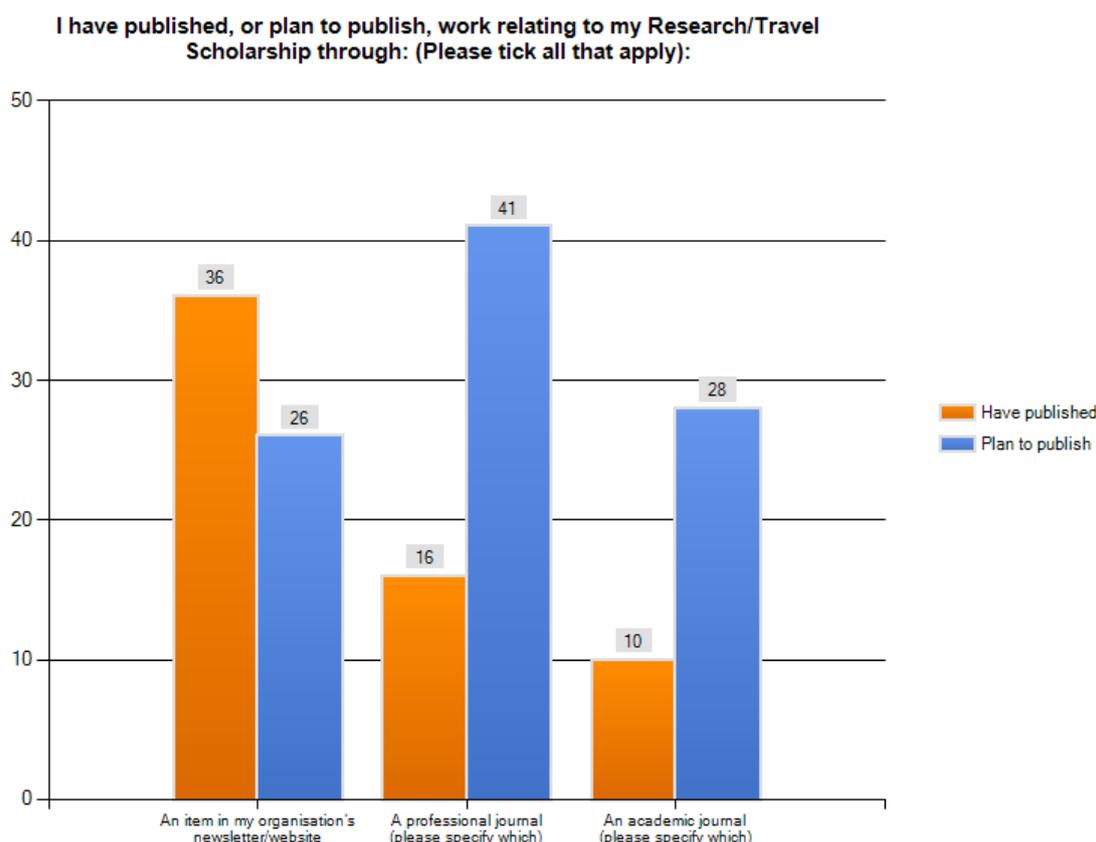
5.4 Dissemination of the outcomes of scholarship awards

5.4.1 Publications

This question asked scholars specifically about publishing work from their scholarships, publications already completed and those planned; scholars could respond to as many categories as applied. Of the 80 scholars who responded, 36 had published an item in their organisation's newsletter and a further 26 planned to do so; 16 had published in a professional journal and a further 41 planned to do so; and 10 scholars had published in an academic journal with a further 28 intending to do so (see Figure 11). Scholars were asked to specify where they had published, or were planning to publish; 40 scholars responded, of which six stated that they were undecided. A total of 28 journals were referred to by scholars, which included a wide range of academic, professional and specialist journals. Journals referred to more than once were: Nursing Standard (5); Emergency nurse (2); British Journal of Nursing (8); Nursing Times (2); Nursing Management (2).

Of the Travel scholars, 29 had published an item in their organisation’s newsletter and a further 11 planned to do so; 12 had published in a professional journal and a further 20 planned to do so; and six scholars had published in an academic journal with a further 14 intending to do so. Most Research scholars were still planning publications; seven had published an item in their organisation’s newsletter and a further five planned to do so; four had published in a professional journal and a further 21 planned to do so; and four scholars had published in an academic journal with a further 14 intending to do so.

Figure 11 Publications relating to the scholarship



Reasons for not publishing work related to their Research/Travel scholarship

Fourteen respondents answered this question: 7 Travel and 7 Research scholars. Of the 14, nine indicated an intention to publish (4 Travel and 5 Research scholars) (e.g. *“In progress.”*; *“I do not feel that the fairly dry area of a research methodology module makes very interesting reading - my plans to publish are about my development as a research nurse.”*).

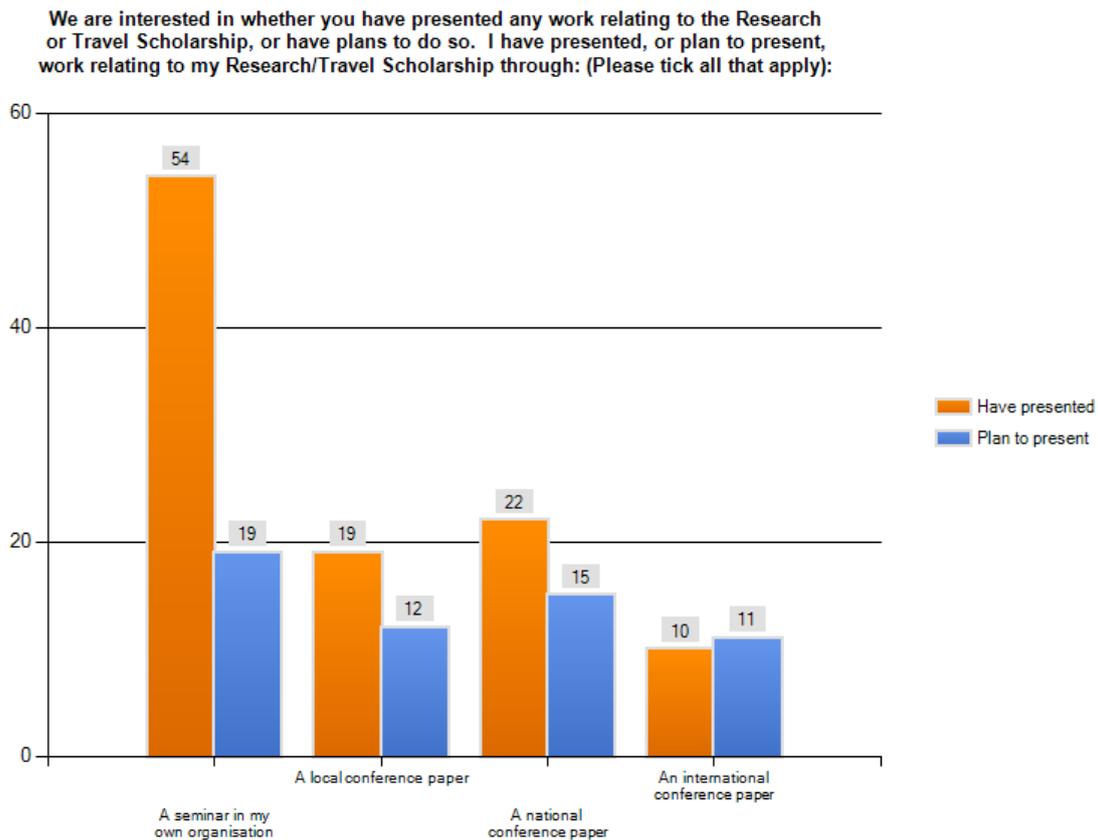
Of those who indicated that they do not intend to publish, one related to a change in role and subsequent retirement, and the other four cited a lack of time and/or capacity as the hindrance to publication.

5.4.2 Presentations

Scholars were asked about presenting work from their scholarships: presentations already completed and those planned; scholars could respond to as many categories as were relevant (see Figure 12). The majority of scholars (54) had presented in their own organisations and most others (19) planned to present seminars in their organisations. However, a minority of scholars had presented, or intended to present, at local, national or

international conferences. Scholars were asked to specify the forums at which they had presented. Six scholars had presented at the FNF conference. A variety of other national conferences or other forums were cited and most were specialist in nature, for example, the Breast Cancer Care Nursing Network, the Scottish National Leg Ulcer Forum, Wales Centre for Practice Innovation Conference. International conferences included International Network for Psychiatric Nursing Research conference, the RCN International Nursing Research conference and EULAR (European League against Rheumatism). Some scholars did not specify the conference but did refer to the countries where they had presented; these included Australia and the USA.

Figure 12 Presentations relating to the scholarship



Of the 46 Travel scholars who responded, 35 had presented a seminar at their own organisation with a further 10 intending to do so; 15 had presented a local conference paper and a further six intended to do so; 17 had presented a national conference paper and a further eight intended to present nationally. Only five Travel scholars had presented internationally, with a further seven planning to do so. Of the 34 Research scholars who provided further information about their presentations, 19 had presented a seminar at their own organisation with a further nine planning to do so; four had presented a local conference paper and a further six intended to do so; five had presented a national conference paper and a further seven intended to present nationally. Only five Research scholars had presented internationally, with a further four planning to do so.

Reasons for not presenting work related to Research/Travel scholarships

There were six responses to the invitation to comment. One Travel scholar stated that they had presented locally, and the other Travel scholar expressed an intention to present (“We

have not had the opportunity to change the learning into actions that can demonstrate the changes in the system as the result of the travel scholarship.”).

Of the four Research scholars, one person indicated an intention to present and the others cited the following reasons for not presenting:

- A lack of time
- That undertaking a research module does not provide content for dissemination.
- That the respondent was/is not in a position to attend any conferences.

5.5 Scholars' perceptions of support from the FNF and any improvements needed

5.5.1 Support received from the Foundation for the scholarship

The majority of the respondents were very positive about the support that they received from the Foundation for their scholarship. The very small number (2) negative comments suggest that support could have been enhanced. The positive comments far outweighed these negative comments and these two comments were seen as 'outliers'. The points made, though, are picked up in the next section where quotes are used to illustrate aspects of the experience that could potentially be improved.

Other respondents (over half of them across each of the scholarships) wrote about supportive aspects relating to the administration of the scholarship, input from the leadership within the organisation and the interest that was demonstrated in the scholars' activities. In addition five of the scholars noted the excellent mentorship that they received (four of them were Travel scholars). It appears that these inputs facilitated inspiration and motivation within many of the scholars.

I have also been very pleased about the access I have had to prompt advice throughout the course of my scholarship.

It has all worked well, the administrative staff are very helpful.

I also enjoyed the email contact with the Scholarship sponsor which I found personal and interested.

It was very helpful to be given a mentor for the scholarship. We met several times and I was challenged with specific outcomes to aim for so I found it inspiring and helpful.

I had marvellous support from [the FNF leadership] and my mentor. Last year was the best year of my nursing career and has inspired me to chase my dreams and to look at ways of improving the patient experience.

The Foundation was there for support, gave me an opportunity I would otherwise never have taken and I will be forever grateful as I believe it really enhanced the patient experience in my organisation.

Seventeen of the respondents (out of a total of 79) highlighted aspects of the process that they found supportive in relation to the interview and selection process. More of the Research scholars (11) wrote about this aspect. As well as this, a further 16 respondents wrote about the requirements for reporting and conference attendance as part of the scholarship, alongside a sense of direction for the scholarships. The respondents seemed to welcome the input from the Foundation. On the other hand, eight respondents noted that they found a 'low intervention' approach (seven of these were Travel scholars) in relation to

the planning of the scholarship activities – this was viewed as a positive aspect of the experience. Overall, what these comments seemed to demonstrate was a flexible yet structured approach to all aspects of the scholarship journey allowing scholars to feel empowered yet provided with suitable direction:

The interviews were challenging and provided a new perspective on the subject in question. It was good to be signposted to other sources of information.

The Foundation kept in touch and were also easy to contact at any time but did not put pressure on me with regard to the progress of my research and dissertation write-up, meaning that they were supportive without ever being 'interfering'.

Exacting deadlines for reports and clear guidelines for what was required. Detailed feedback regarding reports.

The motivation – I think the clarity of expectations from the Foundation – very clear targets to work towards were extremely helpful. Encouragement from [FNF leadership] was also fantastic – linking clearly to targets and expectations she conveyed a sense of enthusiasm for what I was trying to achieve, was clear with expectations, and managed to wrap this all up in professionalism that motivated and inspired me.

Literature on how best to write my application and report.

Fourteen respondents (eight Research and six Travel scholars) noted the importance of the funding in terms of the Foundation's support for the scholarships.

Interestingly eight scholars (all Travel scholars) were enthusiastic about the prestige that they felt came from being a Florence Nightingale Foundation scholar. The following quote encapsulates the similar views of others whilst also drawing together some of the other aspects of the experience that scholars found supportive.

Professionally the Scholarship 'created' time to go away and learn and then 'created' the route to make a difference as a result of the findings. The financial support 'created' the time and the prestige of the Foundation 'created' the opportunities to make a difference.

5.5.2 Further support required

A total of 49 respondents (68%) stated that they did not require any further support for the scholarships. Of these 26 were Travel scholars and 23 were Research scholars. The main additional support that respondents identified was links to other scholars and/or mentorship (16 in total with 10 Travel and 6 Research scholars) as illustrated by the following quote:

It would have been quite useful to have had a 'mentor' who had already completed a Scholarship.

A range of other factors were identified in small numbers and these are included for the sake of completion and to ensure that all learning possible can be gained from the perspectives of the respondents.

I think it was difficult financially as all the bills still need paying at home and [the country visited] is very expensive at the moment for everyday necessities.

I think it would have been useful to have some more support/feedback regarding the lengthy reports that are required as part of the scholarship. This would help it feel acknowledged by the FNF, and perhaps a dedicated session at the annual FNF conference for the scholars to present their work.

I struggled a bit with writing up my report. I had to work/study around my work and family commitments – which was difficult at times. My academic skills were very rusty and the report did not come easily to me but I did pass the scholarship and this was a big morale boost for me.

A Florence Nightingale publication of scholars' findings and impact of studies would be useful, to share with and learn from other scholars.

The award did not cover the total expenditure on accommodation in [the country visited] and I self-funded the short-fall as well as the UK travel and accommodation element. Again, I have no problem with it as it was worth every penny. However, it might be useful to future scholars to have these types of discussions with their mentors or previous scholars in order to prepare them before the event, rather than finding out the hard way.

5.6 Views about how the scholarships could be better promoted to other nurses or midwives.

5.6.1 Improvements to the Research/Travel Scholarship programmes

Respondents who stated 'nothing' or made the same suggestions as in the previous question, amounted to 50% of the total number of respondents, spread fairly evenly across the two scholarship groups.

One key area came through as having the potential for improvement: marketing of the scholarships in relation to awareness raising and ensuring that the message is received in departments and organisations, as well as across levels of staff:

I would like to see it encouraged and extended to less experienced staff within organisations. I don't think enough is done to promote it within [particular kind of organisation].

Perhaps greater promotion of its existence may be beneficial. Many of my colleagues were unaware of it.

In relation to encouraging colleagues to apply for a scholarship, of the 79 scholars who responded, 75 (94.9%) agreed strongly that they would encourage others to apply for an FNF scholarship and a further one scholar agreed moderately (see Figure 13). The remaining three scholars disagreed: one moderately and two strongly.

Open comments were invited and 35 scholars wrote comments; these were generally very positive. A number of the scholars wrote that they had already encouraged others to apply, for example:

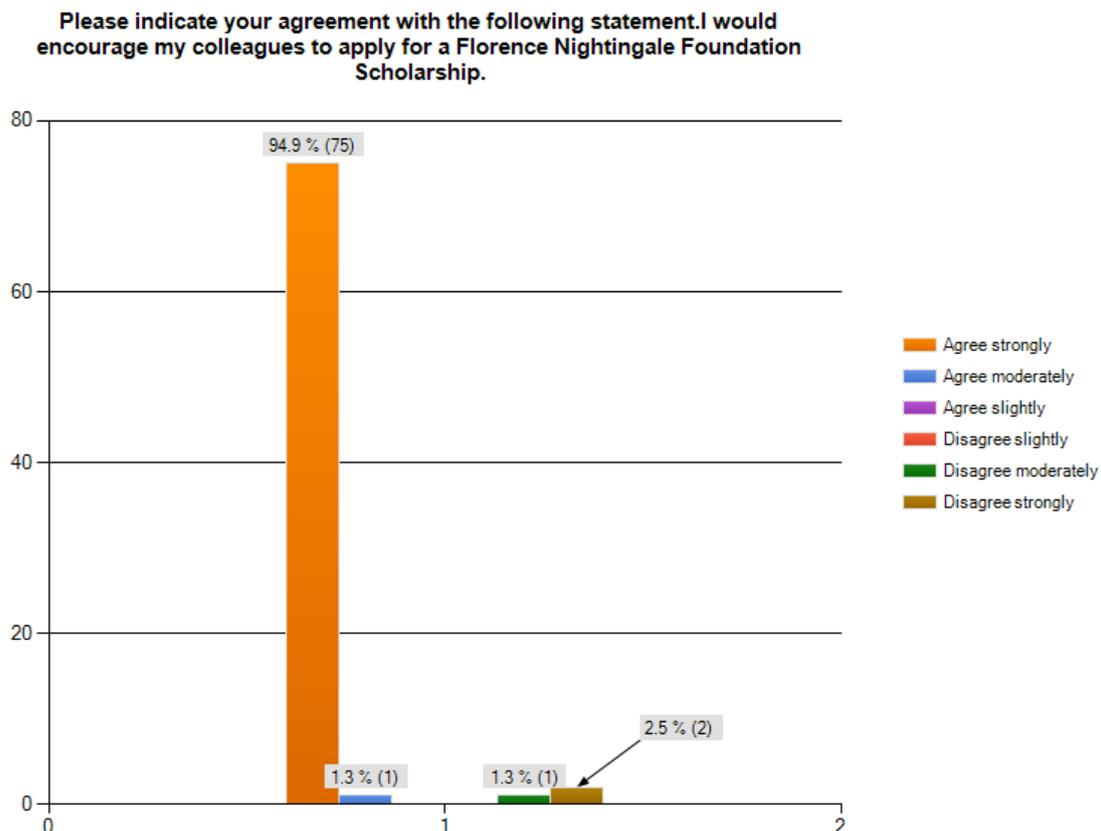
I have and do encourage my colleagues.

I have told everyone that this is an amazing opportunity.

I enjoyed the process and would highly recommend the scholarship.

This is a great opportunity to visit colleagues in other countries who are leading the field in your profession and whose expertise can enhance both your professional practice and that of others.

Figure 13 Encouraging colleagues to apply for an FNF scholarship



Others wrote that they would encourage others but with certain reservations:

If the scheme was more flexible in how the funds could be spent.

For nurses to seek out and explore good practice and benchmarking exercises are invaluable but novice nurses may find the process daunting.

I can only add it's a very positive experience if you have a clear idea what you want to do and have some flexibility to look at whatever comes your way.

Yes for personal benefit as to how you feel as a professional that you are trying to improve patient experience, but don't expect your employer to reward you for it.

Yes but you have to be dedicated.

6. Discussion and recommendations

There are a number of discussion points and concluding remarks that can be made in relation to the findings from the evaluation of the Research and Travel Scholarships. It is helpful to go back to the initial objectives of the evaluation, listed again for ease of reference:

1. Develop a profile of nurses and midwives who have been awarded Research and Travel scholarships and make comparisons between the two programmes;
2. Examine the scholars' expectations of their scholarships and their overall experiences;
3. Examine scholars' perceptions of the impact of their scholarships, in relation to: their career, their personal, professional practice, patient care, safety and experience, and their profession and colleagues;
4. Examine whether, and how, scholars disseminate the outcomes of their scholarship awards;
5. Explore scholars' perceptions of support from the FNF and any improvements needed;
6. Elicit scholars' views about how the scholarships could be better promoted to other nurses or midwives.

The overall profile of the scholars was varied with many of them coming from a practice-based background (and defined as practitioners within the evaluation). All those defined as Executive Management were Travel Scholars and most of those who defined themselves as educators were also Travel Scholars. Unsurprisingly most of those with research-related roles were Research Scholars. There was a wide range of experience within the scholarship group with respondents working across all fields of practice and midwifery, and across a variety of settings. Additionally, there was a huge range of length of experience (from six months to 38 years), and a range of academic qualifications. What this seems to demonstrate is that the scholarships have something to offer a diverse group of registered nurses and midwives, appealing to a range of specialisms and roles, as well as to those with different levels of academic and practice experiences.

Expectations of the scholarships appeared, overall, to match experiences for both the Research and the Travel scholarships. In fact, where there was a difference between expectations and experiences it was usually that the scholarship had exceeded expectations on a number of different levels (for example, in relation to the support provided by the scholarship, or in relation to the learning acquired through participation in the scholarship activities whatever these might have been). There was overwhelming agreement across the Travel and Research scholar respondents that the experience had been an excellent one which had provided benefits at personal and organisational levels.

A number of key findings demonstrate the impact that the scholarships had, generally, at both personal and professional levels. These have been explored in some depth within the previous sections and are collated and summarised as follows:

- Respondents felt that they were valued both personally and professionally. They felt this for a number of reasons: that they had been successful in being awarded a scholarship following what was seen as a rigorous selection process; that their project or activity was seen as worthy of financial support; that their experience on the scholarship was taken seriously by the FNF evidenced by the stringent reporting requirements and the personalised responses to that reporting.
- Many of the respondents felt inspired by the process of undertaking the scholarship which seemed to lead to feelings of energy and motivation. This feeling was described in a number of ways: linking into the feeling of being valued, they felt

inspired by the belief that the FNF placed in them for their project; that the networks and relationships that built up over the scholarship inspired their thinking in relation to their particular project; that some of the people that they came into contact with were inspirational in themselves. Given the current context of healthcare, and in particular some of the aspects of nursing that are subject to public scrutiny, approaches that enhance nurses' and midwives' feelings of inspiration, motivation, and energy should be seen as a positive contribution to practice overall.

- Networking has been alluded to; however, its importance within the overall experience should be emphasised as many of the respondents described the specific networks that they created, and those that were embedded within the process of completing the scholarship. It is worth noting that there were some respondents who felt that further structured approaches to increasing networking opportunities could have been beneficial (for example, through activities or sessions run by the FNF). With networking becoming more important in any healthcare professionals' work, this aspect of the overall scholarship experience should not be under-estimated. For example, some of the scholars indicated that the scholarship networks would enable them to forge future collaborative relationships.
- The impact of the scholarships on practice came through strongly in many of the responses. Of particular interest is the 'ripple effect' that the participation in the scholarship had in relation to wider practice. While much of the ripple effect was at a local level (for example, learning gained through a travel scholarship that was disseminated across a local practice area), there were some respondents who indicated that the learning for healthcare practice was wider. An important aspect of the findings from the evaluation is that the positive impact that many of these scholarships had on the individual concerned was, in fact, greater than that – with positive outcomes rippling across organisations and more widely. While impact could only be measured in relation to the respondents' perceptions, the level of public output (presentations and journal articles) indicates that this is probably the case. Given the current climate in which nursing and other healthcare professionals are being held to account for the quality of care/practice, it is vital that nurses and midwives continue to develop their practice (Francis, 2013). A wider point could possibly be made that initiatives such as the FNF scholarships allows for personal and professional development with a clear focus on the improvement of patient care.

In relation to the process of undertaking the scholarship – relating to the selection process, the communication with the FNF, and other practical aspects – there was overwhelming agreement that the support was excellent. While there were a number of suggestions made for potential improvements (these are listed in the recommendations), most of the respondents clearly enjoyed and valued the approach of the FNF with a general view that they were empowered to take forward their scholarships in ways that were most suitable to the individual and the wider professional community.

6.1 Recommendations

1. Continue to offer Research and Travel Scholarships for nurses and midwives working in a variety of settings and at a variety of levels.
2. Enhance awareness of the scholarships so that potential applicants across multiple settings and differing roles are aware of the opportunities through a strong promotional process.
3. Review how information is communicated about some aspects of the scholarship requirements (for example, reporting and financial requirements), to ensure fullest understanding.
4. Consider whether there could be different reporting requirements for those Research Scholars who undertake research modules.

5. Continue to provide the level of support for scholars that is currently available, and tailor support to the different needs of the scholars (for example, some scholars appeared to work most effectively with a level of freedom to choose the activities for the scholarship).
6. Offer further structured opportunities for networking amongst the scholars. These opportunities could include face-to-face and online contacts.
7. Provide opportunities for further mentorship for the scholars and/or 'buddying' with previous scholars.

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Appendix 1 Questionnaire

SECTION 1 Demographic and other relevant information

Please write in your responses below:

Type of scholarship awarded (Research or Travel scholarship)	
Role at point of scholarship commencement	
Current role (if different from above)	
Length of time since initial professional registration at the point you commenced your scholarship	
Highest level academic qualification	
Overview of the key activities within the scholarship (no more than two sentences) (e.g. for Travel Scholars – the location and overall purpose; for Research Scholars – the type of course or research activity)	

SECTION 2 Your experience of the scholarship

Your expectations of the Scholarship

Q1 We are interested in knowing what your expectations were when you applied to the Florence Nightingale Foundation for a Research or Travel Scholarship.

Briefly outline your expectations here.

--

Q2. Please indicate your agreement with the statement below.

The Research or Travel Scholarship met my expectations.

Agree strongly Agree moderately Agree slightly Disagree slightly Disagree moderately Disagree strongly

Comments

--

Impact of your scholarship

Q3. Please indicate your agreement with the statement below.

The Research or Travel Scholarship has had a positive impact on my career.

Agree strongly Agree moderately Agree slightly Disagree slightly Disagree moderately Disagree strongly

What changes in your career do you think can be attributed to the scholarship?

4. Please indicate your agreement with the statement below.

The Research or Travel Scholarship has had a positive impact on my personal, professional practice.

Agree strongly Agree moderately Agree slightly Disagree slightly Disagree moderately Disagree strongly

Comments

5. How likely are you to continue with further research/scholarship, following on from the Research or Travel scholarship? (e.g. publications, presentations, further travel, further research or research modules)

Very likely Quite likely Not very likely Not likely Not sure

If you have already planned further research/scholarship, please summarise this in the box below.

Dissemination of your Scholarship work

6. As you know, it is a requirement of your scholarship to publish your work as a result of the scholarship.

I have published, or plan to publish, work relating to my Research/Travel Scholarship through:
(Please tick all that apply):

	Have presented	Plan to present
An item in my organisation's newsletter/website		
A professional journal (please specify which)		
An academic journal (please specify which)		
Other (please state)		

If you have **not** published, nor plan to publish any work related to your Research/Travel Scholarship, please write the main reasons below.

7. We are interested in whether you have presented any work relating to the Research or Travel Scholarship, or have plans to do so.

I have presented, or plan to present, work relating to my Research/Travel Scholarship through:
(Please tick all that apply):

	Have presented	Plan to present
A seminar in my own organisation		
A local conference paper		
A national conference paper		
An international conference paper		
Other (please state)		

If you have **not** presented, nor plan to present any work related to your Research/Travel Scholarship, please write the main reasons below.

Impact on patient care/safety/experience and your profession

8. We are interested in knowing if the Research/Travel Scholarship has in any way affected patient care, patient safety, and patient experience. We understand that these are your subjective ratings, but they are helpful to us nonetheless.

Agree strongly **Agree moderately** **Agree slightly** **Disagree slightly** **Disagree moderately** **Disagree strongly** **N/A**

Impact on patient care

Patient safety

Patient experience

Briefly describe how the Research/Travel Scholarship has had an impact on patient care, safety and experience. If it had no effect, briefly explain why.

9. We are interested in knowing whether you feel that undertaking the Research/Travel Scholarship has in any way affected or influenced your profession as a whole or colleagues. We understand that these are your subjective ratings, but they are helpful to us nonetheless.

Agree strongly **Agree moderately** **Agree slightly** **Disagree slightly** **Disagree moderately** **Disagree strongly** **N/A**

Impact on profession as a whole

Impact on colleagues

Briefly describe how the Research/Travel Scholarship has had an impact on your profession as a whole or colleagues in your profession. If it had no effect, briefly explain why.

Support from the Florence Nightingale Foundation

10. With respect to the support you received from the Foundation for the scholarship, what do you think worked best?

*

11. Is there any other support you would have liked?

Improving the scholarship programme

12. What is needed to improve the Research/Travel scholarship programme?

Your experience

13. Overall, how would you rate your experience of the Florence Nightingale Foundation Research/Travel Scholars Programme?

Very poor

Poor

Average

Good

Excellent

Comments

14. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement.

I would encourage my colleagues to apply for a Florence Nightingale Foundation Scholarship.

Agree strongly

Agree moderately

Agree slightly

Disagree slightly

Disagree moderately

Disagree strongly

Comments

Promoting the scholarships

15. In your view, how can the Florence Nightingale Foundation best promote its Research/Travel Scholarships?

Thank you for completing the survey.