

A Contemporary Philosophy of Advanced Practice Nursing

Michelle J Lespasio, DNP, JD NP*

Assistant Professor, Boston University School of Medicine, Nurse Practitioner, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Boston Medical Center, Boston, Massachusetts.

ABSTRACT

A nursing philosophy provides the foundation for professional advanced nursing practice and guides the development and application of scientific nursing knowledge. Integrating core nursing concepts such as holism, compassion, and respect with established nursing theories offers a meaningful framework for delivering patient-centered care. This integration supports the advancement of nursing knowledge while strengthening the role of evidence-informed practice in clinical decision-making. As a result, nursing philosophy and theory serve as essential foundations for contemporary nursing practice by promoting professional growth, clinical reasoning, and high-quality patient care.

KEYWORDS

Nursing philosophy, Nursing theory, Metaparadigm, Nursing science, Nursing art, Borrowed theory.

Corresponding Author Information

Michelle J. Lespasio

Assistant Professor, Boston University School of Medicine, Nurse Practitioner, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Boston Medical Center, Boston, Massachusetts

Received: June 18, 2026; **Accepted:** July 25, 2026; **Published:** August 06, 2026

Copyright: © 2026 ASRJS. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.

Citation: Michelle J Lespasio. A Contemporary Philosophy of Advanced Practice Nursing. Int J Nurs Health Care. 2026; 2(5):1-5.

Introduction

Nursing is a complex professional discipline that encompasses scientific knowledge, clinical expertise, ethical reasoning, and human caring. As healthcare environments become increasingly diverse and technologically advanced, nurses are required to navigate multiple sources of knowledge while responding to the unique needs, values, and experiences of patients. Consequently, nursing philosophy remains essential for understanding the foundations of practice and guiding professional decision-making.

Historically, nursing scholars have emphasized that nursing is both a science and an art, integrating empirical evidence with compassionate care and therapeutic relationships. Philosophical

perspectives provide a framework for examining how nurses understand persons, health, environment, and nursing practice, while also informing the development and application of nursing knowledge. Despite continued advances in evidence-based practice, questions remain regarding how different forms of knowledge should be valued and integrated within nursing.

This paper explores a contemporary philosophy of nursing grounded in the metaparadigm concepts of person, health, environment, and nursing. Drawing on pluralistic perspectives, the discussion considers how scientific evidence, lived experience, clinical judgment, and relational caring contribute to nursing practice. By examining these foundational concepts, the paper

offers a philosophical perspective that supports holistic, patient-centered care while acknowledging the complexity and diversity of contemporary healthcare.

Philosophical Foundations of Nursing Practice

A nursing philosophy provides a framework and worldview that identify the values, assumptions, concepts, and actions central to the scientific development and professional practice of nursing [1]. Grounded in individualized, holistic, and evidence-informed care, a nursing philosophy recognizes the unique needs, experiences, and values of each patient while integrating the best available evidence with clinical expertise and compassionate practice.

In ambulatory orthopaedic surgery, the nurse practitioner operationalizes this philosophy by ensuring patients are medically optimized for surgery through comprehensive assessment, risk identification, patient education, interdisciplinary collaboration, and evidence-informed clinical management. Optimal surgical outcomes require more than addressing a patient's musculoskeletal condition alone. Effective nursing care includes comprehensive assessment of the individual's overall health, underlying medical conditions, health behaviors, and social determinants of health. Through patient education, interdisciplinary collaboration, and evidence-informed nursing interventions, nurses promote perioperative health and improve postoperative outcomes.

Patients and their families often experience fear, uncertainty, and apprehension when facing orthopaedic surgery or other significant health challenges. Nursing practice therefore extends beyond technical expertise to include compassionate communication, respect, preservation of dignity, emotional support, and patient advocacy. As both science and art, nursing integrates empirical knowledge with therapeutic relationships to promote holistic, patient-centered care and improve perioperative outcomes.

Consistent with Fawcett's metaparadigm [2] and reciprocal interaction worldview [3], this philosophy recognizes the complex and dynamic relationship among persons, health, environment and nursing. It acknowledges that clinical practice encompasses both objective and subjective realities, supporting the integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches to nursing knowledge. This perspective emphasizes collaborative partnerships with patients and families, respect for individual goals and circumstances, and a commitment to lifelong professional development to advance evidence-informed nursing practice in an evolving healthcare environment.

Nursing Metaparadigms and the Science and Art of Nursing

Nursing philosophy and the development of nursing knowledge are grounded in the metaparadigm concepts of person, nurse, health, and environment [2]. The nursing metaparadigm provides a global perspective that defines the discipline's domain and guides professional practice, scholarship, and knowledge development [2]. Together, these foundational concepts shape nursing's

understanding of human health experiences and support the delivery of meaningful, evidence-informed, and person-centered care [4].

Nursing is both a human science and a practice discipline that integrates scientific knowledge, clinical reasoning, compassion, and therapeutic relationships. Nursing science incorporates objective, subjective, reflective, and interpretative forms of knowledge to address the complex and dynamic nature of human health [5]. As a practice discipline, nursing seeks to promote health, prevent illness and complications, alleviate suffering, and improve quality of life [6,7]. Consequently, effective nursing practice requires the integration of scientific evidence with the art of caring.

Clinical practice, scholarship, and lifelong professional development contribute to the advancement of nursing knowledge and support compassionate, patient-centered care that improves outcomes for individuals, families, and communities.

Reciprocal Interaction Worldview

Guided by Fawcett's reciprocal interaction worldview [3] and Carper's [8] patterns of knowing, nursing recognizes patients as complex individuals whose health experiences are shaped by biological, psychological, social and environmental influences. In orthopaedic surgery and other clinical settings, this perspective emphasizes understanding each patient's goals, health behaviors, life circumstances, and support systems to provide individualized, collaborative care. Delivering person-centered care requires continual professional development, reflective practice, and the ongoing integration of diverse forms of nursing knowledge into evolving clinical practice.

Metaparadigm Concept of Person

The metaparadigm concept of person refers to the individual receiving nursing care and encompasses the physical, emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of human experience. According to Thorne and colleagues [9], nursing focuses on understanding both the individual and the meanings assigned to health experiences. Within Fawcett's Reciprocal Interaction Worldview [3], human beings are viewed as complex, dynamic individuals who continuously interact with their environments and relationships. Consequently, nursing care should be individualized and guided by each person's unique health goals, values, and lived experiences.

Individuals are understood as holistic beings whose physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and environmental dimensions are interconnected. This holistic perspective recognizes that care should extend beyond the treatment of disease to address the person. In orthopaedic practice, this approach is particularly important because musculoskeletal conditions often affect mobility, independence, emotional well-being, and quality of life. Accordingly, comprehensive nursing care integrates physical, psychosocial, and environmental considerations to promote recovery, adaptation, and optimal health outcomes.

Compassion and Respect

Compassion and respect are foundational principles of professional nursing practice. Compassion involves recognizing suffering and responding with empathy and a genuine commitment to alleviating distress [10,11]. Respect acknowledges each patient's individuality, dignity, beliefs, values, and autonomy [12]. In practice, these principles are demonstrated through active listening, shared decision-making, emotional support, and individualized care that honors the patient's preferences, goals, and lived experiences.

Metaparadigm Concept of Nurse in Advanced Practice

The advanced practice nurse plays an essential role in delivering compassionate, evidence-based, and person-centered care. Trust serves as the foundation of the nurse-patient relationship and is strengthened through compassion, effective communication, and shared decision-making [13]. Nurse practitioners are registered nurses with advanced clinical education who provide comprehensive care across diverse patient populations. Their influence on patient outcomes reflects the integration of clinical expertise, evidence-informed practice, and therapeutic relationships, demonstrating that every nurse-patient interaction contributes meaningfully to health and well-being [14].

Metaparadigm Concept of Health

Health is conceptualized as a dynamic wellness-illness experience that reflects the condition of the whole person [9,15]. Within nursing, health extends beyond the absence of disease to encompass physical, emotional, psychological, social, and functional well-being. Because health is shaped by personal values, perceptions, life circumstances, and quality of life, each individual experiences and defines health uniquely. Consequently, nursing practice requires an individualized understanding of health that recognizes the diverse ways individuals interpret and respond to health and illness.

Advanced nursing practice promotes health, optimizes functioning, supports adaptation to changing health conditions, and enhances quality of life through evidence-informed, person-centered care. This perspective is particularly relevant in ambulatory orthopaedic surgery, where musculoskeletal conditions may influence mobility, independence, emotional well-being, and overall quality of life.

Therapeutic Relationships

Nursing science contributes to understanding the physiological and psychosocial dimensions of health and illness [16], while the art of nursing emphasizes the development of holistic care [14]. These relationships foster a deeper understanding of patients' perceptions of their health experiences and support care that addresses not only physical needs but also the emotional, psychological, and personal meanings associated with illness and recovery.

Guided by Fawcett's reciprocal interaction worldview [3] and

Parse's totality perspective [17], individuals are viewed as active participants in their health experiences who continuously interact with their environments. Health is therefore influenced by personal goals, environmental conditions, relationships, and social contexts. Within this perspective, advanced nursing practice recognizes the unique ways individuals evaluate their health and quality of life while supporting individualized, evidence-informed interventions that promote healing, adaptation, and overall well-being.

Metaparadigm Concept of Environment

The metaparadigm concept of environment encompasses the physical, social, cultural, and interpersonal contexts that influence an individual's ability to achieve and maintain health [15]. Rather than viewing individuals in isolation, nursing recognizes that health experiences are shaped through continuous interactions between persons and their environments. Consequently, nursing practice extends beyond the social determinants and contextual factors that shape health outcomes [18].

Fawcett's [3] reciprocal interaction, Parse's [17] totality perspective, and Newman's [19] interactive-integrative perspective collectively portray individuals as active participants who continuously influence and are influenced by their environments. From this perspective, environment is a dynamic and evolving construct shaped by personal relationships, cultural values, institutional structures, and societal conditions [9].

Nursing science provides theoretical foundation for understanding these complex interactions, while the art of nursing applies this knowledge to individualized care. Environmental assessment therefore includes consideration of factors such as social support, financial stability, access to healthcare, housing, and community resources to ensure that interventions are safe, feasible, and responsive to the individual's circumstances. Integrating environmental context into clinical decision-making promotes holistic, patient-centered care and supports sustainable health outcomes across diverse populations.

Furthering the Nursing Profession through Nursing Science and Art

Nursing science is grounded in human caring and informed by the arts, humanities, and multiple ways of knowing, including empirical, reflective, interpretive, and experiential knowledge [1]. This foundation enables nurses to understand individuals as whole persons and to deliver individualized, evidence-informed care. Advanced nursing practice integrates nursing knowledge, clinical expertise, diagnostic reasoning, and the best available evidence to support sound clinical decision-making.

Nursing art complements scientific knowledge by fostering therapeutic relationships, compassionate presence, and individualized care that reflects each person's values, experiences, and goals. Integrating scientific evidence with clinical judgment and patient preferences enables nurses to tailor interventions that

are both clinically appropriate and meaningful within the patient's unique context [20]. Such integration advances nursing knowledge, strengthens professional practice, and promotes holistic, patient-centered care that improves health outcomes and quality of life [21].

Nursing Knowledge in Practice

Nursing's five ways of knowing

Nursing knowledge extends beyond theory and is fundamental to delivering safe, effective, and patient-centered advanced practice care. As a human science, nursing recognizes that health experiences are understood within individual, social, and cultural contexts [1]. Consequently, nursing knowledge is derived not only from empirical evidence but also from the meanings, patterns, and lived experiences that inform clinical practice [22].

Carper [8] identified four foundational patterns of knowing in nursing: empirical, ethical, personal, and aesthetic knowing. Empirical knowing represents the scientific foundation of nursing through research, theory, and evidence-based practice. Ethical knowing guides moral reasoning and professional decision-making. Personal knowing emphasizes self-awareness and the therapeutic uses of self in developing authentic nurse-patient relationships. Aesthetic knowing reflects the art of nursing through intuitive, individualized, and compassionate care.

White [23] later expanded Carper's framework by introducing sociopolitical knowing which recognizes the influence of social, cultural, political, organizational, and healthcare systems on nursing practice and patient outcomes. Together, these five ways of knowing provide a comprehensive framework that integrates scientific evidence, ethical judgment, therapeutic relationships, clinical artistry, and contextual awareness to support advanced nursing practice and improve patient care.

Integrating Nursing's Patterns of Knowing into Advanced Practice

The integration of nursing's five ways of knowing enables advanced practice nurses to deliver holistic, patient-centered care by recognizing each patient's unique needs, values, and clinical circumstances. Together, these patterns of knowing unite scientific evidence with ethical reasoning, therapeutic relationships, clinical judgment, and contextual awareness to support individualized decision-making across diverse healthcare settings [23].

In ambulatory orthopaedic surgery practice, empirical knowing guides the comprehensive preoperative assessment through the interpretation of patient history, physical examination findings, diagnostic testing, laboratory results, electrocardiograms, and imaging studies to determine medical readiness for surgery. Ethical knowing informs decisions regarding the appropriateness of proceeding with surgery or recommending additional medical evaluation when patient safety or optimal outcomes may be compromised.

Theories in Advanced Nursing Practice

Nursing theories provide a structured framework that integrates scientific, humanistic, and experiential knowledge to guide clinical reasoning, evidence-based practice, and patient-centered care [1,15,24]. By organizing concepts and relationships, nursing theory supports sound clinical decision-making, promotes holistic assessment, and improves patient outcomes. Advanced practice nurses apply theoretical knowledge to integrate research, critical thinking, and clinical expertise when addressing complex patient needs [25,26].

Within advanced practice, nursing care is informed by biological, psychological, cultural, and environmental factors that influence health and quality of life. Purnell's Model for Cultural Competence [27] provides a framework for understanding how culture, beliefs, values, and life experiences shape health perceptions and supports culturally responsive, patient-centered care.

Orem's Self-Care Deficit Nursing Theory (SCDNT) [28] integrated with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) [29,30], offers a complementary framework for promoting health behaviors and patient engagement. Orem emphasizes the development of self-care agency through supportive-educative nursing interventions, while the Theory of Planned Behavior explains how attitudes, social influences, and perceived behavioral control shape health behaviors. Together, these theories provide a coherent conceptual, theoretical, and empirical foundation for interventions that encourage patient participation, strengthen self-management, and improve surgical outcomes through evidence-based nursing practice.

Development of Nursing Knowledge

Nursing knowledge is advanced through the integration of theory, research, clinical practice, and scholarship. It is derived from multiple sources, including empirical evidence, philosophical inquiry, theoretical frameworks, and experiential understanding, all of which contribute to evidence-informed practice and the ongoing development of nursing as both science and art [8,17,20]. Drawing on Carper's patterns of knowing [8] and Boyer's scholarship of application [31], nursing scholarship bridges theory, research, and practice to improve patient outcomes and strengthen advanced nursing practice.

Nursing scholarship requires the continuous cultivation of evidence-informed knowledge through the integration of academic inquiry and clinical expertise. Nurses critically evaluate evidence, apply theoretical frameworks, and translate knowledge into meaningful clinical action. The integration of nursing theories, borrowed theories, and empirical, interpretative, and critical paradigms broadens the understanding of complex patient experiences while supporting high-quality, patient-centered care [32].

By integrating qualitative and quantitative perspectives with multiple ways of knowing, nursing knowledge extends beyond what is known to what is enacted in practice. This synthesis fosters

compassionate, evidence-informed, equitable care and promotes the continued advancement of nursing knowledge and discipline [33].

Conclusion

A nursing philosophy grounded in the metaparadigm concepts, patterns of knowing, and the integration of nursing science and art provides a comprehensive framework for advanced nursing practice. Guided by principles of holism, compassion, cultural competence, patient-centered care, and evidence-informed decision-making, this philosophy supports ethical, equitable, and clinically responsive care.

The integration of nursing and borrowed theories, interdisciplinary collaboration, and multiple paradigmatic perspectives strengthens clinical reasoning, scholarly inquiry, and the translation of knowledge into practice. By embracing empirical, interpretive, and critical perspectives, nurses are better equipped to address complex health needs, reduce disparities, and promote innovation across diverse healthcare settings.

Ultimately, nursing knowledge advances through the synthesis of multiple ways of knowing into meaningful clinical action. Such an integrative philosophy reinforces nursing's role as a scientifically rigorous, socially responsive, and practice-based discipline that continually advances the science and art of nursing while improving patient and population outcomes.

References

1. Meleis A. Theoretical Nursing: Development and Progress 6thed. Wolters Kluwer. 2018.
2. Fawcett J. The metaparadigm of nursing: present status and future refinements. *Image J Nurs Sch.* 1984; 16: 84-87.
3. Fawcett J. From a plethora of paradigms to parsimony in worldviews. *Nurs Sci Q.* 1993; 6: 56-58.
4. Reed P, Lawrence L. A paradigm for the production of practice-based knowledge. *J Nurs Manag.* 2008; 16: 422-432.
5. Fawcett J. The relationship of theory and research 3rded. F.A. Davis. 1999.
6. Johnson J. Nursing science: Basic, applied, or practical? Implications for the art of nursing. *ANS Adv Nurs Sci.* 1991; 14: 7-16.
7. Johnson J. What constitutes nursing science? In: Cody, W.K. Ed, Philosophical and Theoretical Perspectives for Advanced Nursing Practice 5thed. Jones and Bartlett Publishers. 2013; 171-166.
8. Carper B. Fundamental patterns of knowing in nursing. *Adv Nurs Sci.* 1978; 1: 13-23.
9. Thorne S, Canam C, Dahinten S, Hall W, Henderson A, et al. Nursing's metaparadigm concepts: disimpacting the debates. *J Adv Nurs.* 1998; 27: 1257-1268.
10. Georges J. Emancipatory Theory of Compassion. *Nursology.* 2013.
11. Varghese A, Khakha D. Attributes of compassionate care in clinical nursing practice from the perspectives of patients and nurses-A systematic review. *J Educ Health Promot.* 2025; 14: 110.
12. Jacobs BB. Respect for Human Dignity: A Central Phenomenon to Philosophically Unite Nursing Theory and Practice through Consilience of Knowledge. *ANS Adv Nurs Sci.* 2001; 24: 17-35.
13. <https://www.nursingworld.org/content-hub/resources/becoming-a-nurse/nurse-patient-relationship-trust/>
14. LeVasseur J. Toward an understanding of art in nursing. *ANS Adv Nurs Sci.* 1999; 21: 48-63.
15. Fawcett J. Theory: Basis for the Study and Practice of Nursing Education. *J Nurs Educ.* 1985; 24: 226-229.
16. Younas A, Parsons K. Implications for Paradigm Shift in Nursing. *ANS Adv Nurs Sci.* 2019; 42: 243-254.
17. Parse R. Nursing Science: Major Paradigms, Theories, and Critiques. W.B. Saunders. 1987.
18. Evans R, Barer M, Marmor T. Why are Some People Healthy and Others Not? The Determinants of Health of Populations. Aldine de Gruyter. 1994.
19. Newman MA. Prevailing paradigms in nursing. *Nurs Outlook.* 1992; 40: 10-13.
20. Sherwood G. Reflective practice and knowledge development: Transforming research for a practice-based discipline. *Int J Nurs Sci.* 2024; 11: 399-404.
21. Chinn PL, Maeve K, Bostick C. Aesthetic inquiry and the art of nursing. *Sch Inq Nurs Pract.* 1997; 11: 3-95.
22. Newman MA. The pattern that connects. *Adv Nurs Sci.* 2002; 24: 1-7.
23. White J. Patterns of knowing: review, critique, and update. *ANS Adv Nurs Sci.* 1995; 17: 73-86.
24. Reed P. Nursing Theory Today: What, Why, How. *Nurs Sci Q.* 2025; 38: 36-40.
25. Mitchell GJ, Cody WK. Nursing knowledge and human science: ontological and epistemological considerations. *Nurs Sci Q.* 1992; 5: 54-61.
26. Sparacino PS. The reciprocal relationship between practice and theory. *Clin Nurse Spec.* 1991; 5: 138.
27. Purnell L. The Purnell Model for Cultural Competence. *J Transcult Nurs.* 2002; 13: 193-196.
28. Orem D. Nursing Concepts of Practice 6thed. Mosby. 2001.
29. Ajzen I. From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior. Springer. 1985.
30. Ajzen I. The Theory of Planned Behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes.* 1991; 50: 179-211.
31. Boyer E. Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate special report. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. 1990.
32. Villarruel A, Bishop T, Simpson E, Jemmott L, Fawcett J. Borrowed Theories, Shared Theories, and the Advancement of Nursing Knowledge. *Nurs Sci Q.* 2001; 14: 158-163.
33. Marchuk A. A personal nursing philosophy in practice. *J Neon Nurs.* 2014; 20: 266-273.