Data discovery underpins all our research work

All research relies on data to underpin new discoveries or discussions of well established trains of thought. Whether we term them data, evidence, findings or outcomes, they provide the reader with insight into a research project and allow us to critically assess the project itself. As practitioners and researchers we learn much about health and social care practice, policy and education through the interpretation of data presented in research projects. We are constantly challenged through new discoveries and new evidence about how we view the world to reappraise our knowledge and use the evidence presented to help us achieve our aims.

This edition of *Nurse Researcher* focuses on data gathering as part of the research process. Data gathering offers a great opportunity for nursing and healthcare researchers to engage with familiar or new methods to inform our studies. Data gathering affords a range a methods through which we have the opportunity to access client groups and perspectives that are different to our own, often neglected or sometimes so familiar that we fail to acknowledge the uniqueness of experiences contained in them. Shared approaches to data gathering enable us to talk, share and engage in critical discourse with fellow researchers from a wide range of environments and locations.

Liaising on shared interests across geographical boundaries is a feature of the *Making My Mark* piece in this issue. Dr Kevin Miles gives us an insight into the benefits of remaining open to opportunities in developing your research experiences. His reflections illustrate how data gathering in diverse fields works to optimise the experience of the individual as well as provide evidence to underpin real change in health and social care practice.

The authors in this issue highlight the challenges and opportunities in using various data gathering methods in their research practice. Their accounts encourage us to see data gathering as more than just ‘applying a method’ but as an important phase in the research process.

*Dr Laura Serrant-Green, Editor*