NURSING A DIRECTION ON HEALTH POLICY

Why are so few nurses involved in developing health policies when they are at the heart of implementing them?

Professors Jill White and Mary Chiarella sought to ask this question, together with other vexing issues facing nurses and midwives in the quest for influence in health policy decision making and practice, at the 2nd International Research and Policy Roundtable held in Ottawa, Canada in late September.

Thanks to the President and CEO of the Canadian Nurses Association the second roundtable was held alongside a Commission into the future directions and needs of both nurses and midwives.

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CHRONIC DISEASE RESEARCH:
SYDNEY–SHANGHAI JOINT SYMPOSIUM

Sydney Nursing School enjoyed the opportunity to develop further its relationship with the Shanghai Jiao Tong (SJT) University when we participated in the 4th Joint Symposium between SJT and the University of Sydney, 4–5th August. Medical education and problem-based learning workshops paralleled presentations on the chronic disease theme, which was further explored in a public forum on ‘Urban Development: impact on society and health’, sponsored by the University’s Centre for Obesity, Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease.

The Symposium also featured the signing of a Joint Research Collaboration Agreement for research into cancer, diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular and infectious diseases.

SJT is one of China’s elite China 9 Universities, a grouping similar to Australia’s Group of Eight (Go8). Sydney University’s relationship with SJT began within the Discipline of Pathology (Medicine) in 2000 with substantial research collaborations subsequently developing across many faculties and divisions. Since 2009, Sydney Nursing School’s relationship with the SJT School of Nursing has involved:

- Collaboration on undergraduate cancer nursing curriculum and diabetes education
- Research training workshops
- Staff mobility
- Participation in the annual research symposia
- Partnership events during the Shanghai Expo in 2010

Joint Symposia with the SJT School of Medicine alternate between Sydney and Shanghai. This year Dr Tom Buckley from Sydney Nursing School presented his research on ‘Measuring 24-hour ambulatory blood pressure and HRV in early bereavement’. At the 5th Symposium we look forward to sharing presentations with senior nurse researchers from SJT. This event in 2012 will coincide with the 40th Anniversary of Australia-China relations and the 60th Anniversary of the Shanghai Jiao Tong University Medical School.
DEAN’S MESSAGE

With 2011 rapidly drawing to a close I hope I’m not tempting fate by taking a deep breath and saying “Phew, we’ve made it!” It has indeed been a very busy and productive year. We started the year by announcing our intention to introduce a new Bachelor of Nursing (Advanced Studies) program in 2012 and now I can proudly say that we have transformed this dream into reality. In late September we were absolutely delighted to receive the news that the Bachelor of Nursing (Advanced Studies) curriculum was accredited by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council Board for five years, without conditions. And as we go to press with this newsletter we have also been informed that the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia has approved the program.

The response from prospective students choosing this program has already been very positive with many recent and non-recent school leavers putting the program high in their list of preferences. So we are very much looking forward to welcoming a healthy cohort of students to this new and innovative program in 2012. This is a fantastic outcome and a credit to everyone involved in getting this proposal over the line. And what great news that the University of Sydney can now offer an advanced studies Bachelor of Nursing program to undergraduate students!

You may remember that Professor Mary Chiarella and I were successful in winning an International Program Development Fund grant to conduct the second International Health Research and Policy Roundtable (the first having been held here in Sydney in 2009). We had planned to hold the second roundtable in London. Ultimately, however, we were invited by the Canadian Nurses’ Association to hold it in Canada, in conjunction with their National Expert Commission: “The health of our nation: the future of our health system” (http://expertcommission.cna-aic.ca). The joint meeting was held on 26-28 September in Ottawa, also supported by the Office of the Chief Nurse of Canada Sandra McDonald-Rencz. It was a terrific meeting and I am confident that we are making real progress towards developing an international mechanism for having nurses become more politically aware and policy-able in order to contribute better to national policy making.

Following the International Health Research and Policy Roundtable Mary and I were invited to speak at the Alumni weekend at Yale University in New Haven at the invitation of Professor Donna Diers and the Dean of the Yale School of Nursing, Margaret Grey. As a diabetes expert I hope Margaret will visit us next year and perhaps contribute to nursing’s collaboration on the Centre for Obesity, Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease.

In the last few months we have welcomed many prospective students and alumni to Sydney Nursing School. At Open Day on 27 August I personally found the energy, enthusiasm and optimism of school leavers considering a future career in nursing very, very inspiring. In October we opened our doors to prospective postgraduate students for our Postgraduate Information Evening. It was fantastic to welcome so many nurses and midwives considering postgraduate studies across our specialty programs and higher research degrees. And I’m delighted that so many of our alumni have responded positively to our call to participate in the life of Sydney Nursing School.

I wish you all the very best over the festive season.

–Warm regards, Jill White
NURSING AWARDS

HOC MAI SCHOLARSHIPS TO VIETNAM

Thanks to the generous support of the Hoc Mai Australia Vietnam Medical Foundation we congratulate our four Master of Nursing students who will have the opportunity to travel to Vietnam over the summer break to undertake a one month additional clinical placement.

Scholarship recipients are:
Louise Kan (MN Year 2)
Anna-Louise Hollows (MN Year 2)
Cassandra King (MN Year 1)
Nikki McAlpine (MN year 1)

Students from Medicine, Health Sciences and Nursing gain valuable practical experience in Vietnam. They find these placements incredibly challenging and rewarding and we look forward to hearing more on their return.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARDS

Sydney Nursing School’s mental health academic staff and students were well-recognised at the recent 37th Australian College of Mental Health Nurse’s International Mental Health Nursing Conference.

Tim Wand (PhD student) was awarded the Australian College of Mental Health Nurses Achievement Award for a mental health nurse who is beginning to be recognised nationally for their leadership as a clinician, manager, educator or researcher.

Associate Professor Kim Foster, Dr Andrea McCloughen and Cynthia Delgado won the Research Award for the best peer-reviewed research presentation at the conference.

NHRMC TRIP FELLOWSHIP

Congratulations to Dr Andrea Marshall for receiving the NHMRC Translating Research Intro Practice (TRIP) Fellowship. Andrea is one of only 10 to receive this fellowship and one of three recipients from the University of Sydney.

ALUMNI AWARD FOR NURSING GRADUATE

In the 155 years since the University of Sydney conferred its first degrees, Sydney graduates have changed the world by governing countries, making transformational scientific and medical breakthroughs and exploring the furthest stretches of the earth and how we understand it.

At the annual Alumni Awards on 28 October, the University recognised alumni who have pioneered neuroscience techniques, improved food security in developing countries, and inspired young people from low socio-economic areas of Sydney to engage in tertiary study.

In welcoming guests to Friday’s Alumni Awards in the University’s Great Hall, Dr Spence said the 2011 recipients embody the University’s tradition of “passion, and consistent and unrelenting commitment to making a difference.”

“Our alumni tradition is one of which we are extremely proud,” he told attendees. “It’s a remarkably glorious tradition.”

Sydney Nursing School was obviously thrilled when Nursing alumna Erin Law (MN 2011) was honoured with the The Edmund Barton Medal for Master’s by Coursework Achievement. This is a great honour for Erin and fantastic recognition for nurses within the University of Sydney’s alumni community and their contribution to making a world of difference.

Erin typifies the kind of Sydney Nursing School graduate whom we hope will go on to make significant contributions to health care. While a student at Sydney Nursing School she was placed on the Dean’s list of excellence in academic performance in 2009 and was active as a student representative to faculty and academic boards.

Erin is also extremely passionate about global health. In 2010, she won the Women’s Plans Foundation Award which is given to a student with a demonstrated interest in global health and an understanding of the role of family planning in women’s development in developing countries. In 2011, she was awarded the Hoc Mai Foundation Scholarship to enable her to undertake an additional clinical placement in Vietnam, working with trauma patients in an emergency department.

Erin is now working in Darwin at the Royal Darwin Hospital undertaking a Paediatric rotation as part of her New Graduate program.

Image above: L-R Margaret Martin (Alumni Council), Erin Law and Professor Jill White
SINGAPORE CELEBRATIONS

In September a fabulous graduation ceremony was held for our off-shore Bachelor of Nursing (Post Registration) students in Singapore.

The Bachelor of Nursing (Post Registration) is offered by Sydney Nursing School in partnership with Singapore Institute of Management Pte Ltd (SIMPL).

Sydney Nursing School’s Professor Jill White, Dr Heather McKenzie, Associate Professor Maureen Boughton, Stuart Newman, Dr Murray Fisher and Dr John Grootjans attended the graduation. Professor John Hearne, DVC (International) also attended and we were very pleased to have Dr Yen Yen Chia (Deputy Director of KK Women and Children’s hospital, Singapore and one of our PhD graduates) join the academic procession. Yen Yen was also the invited guest speaker for the University of Sydney Reception Alumni event on 8 September 8 at which she gave a very inspiring address.

Deputy Chancellor Mr Alan Cameron AO presided at the ceremony and admitted 92 students into the degree.

Ms Kwek Puay Ee, Director of Nursing, Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Singapore delivered the occasional address. She recounted her personal academic journey that commenced 10 years ago when she was a student in the 15th intake of the University of Sydney’s Bachelor of Health Science (Nursing) in 2000.

“The timing of the degree was just right as the new knowledge and information gained facilitated/enhanced my new role as the Director of Nursing in 2001 and the management of the SARS situation at Tan Tock Seng Hospital in 2003. I have no regrets that I opted for this program instead of others. The academic knowledge gained from the enlightened teaching staff was excellent. You have made the right choice in choosing to do your degree here with SIM-University of Sydney.”

Ms Kwek mentioned several challenges for the future of nursing in Singapore and which are reflected in the Bachelor of Nursing (Post Registration) program, such as communication, practice standards, development of multidisciplinary teams, use of evidence in practice and embracing technologies. She encouraged the graduates to “see every challenge as an opportunity”, referring to the Chinese saying “Wei Ji”. Wei (crisis) and Ji (opportunities), meaning that for every crisis there are opportunities to be found.”

Three students were recognized by SIMPL for their outstanding academic achievement throughout the course. The gold medal was awarded to Chua Ah Keok, silver to Judy Lek Soh Hoon and bronze to Ling Yan Peng Melissa. Eleven of the cohort achieved a distinction average and were awarded their degree with Merit.

Congratulations to all the 2011 Singapore graduates. We hope you look back on this day as a wonderful occasion and a fantastic achievement.

Associate Professor Maureen Boughton celebrates with the Singapore class of 2011 and their families.