

FROM THE EDITOR - Margaret McMillan

EMBRACING COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

As I take up the role of Editor of the *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing*, I would like to acknowledge the contributions of the previous Editor, Heather Dawson. Her summary of the advances made by *AJAN* over the last five years is impressive.

However, not only has *AJAN* undergone significant change, as Heather noted in the last issue, but so has the profession of nursing. I anticipate further changes as nursing professionals embrace their role as partners in more formal research, including collaborative research, with our health service colleagues. More manuscripts will result from those scholarly and practice initiatives.

There are a number of issues that are focusing the minds of nurses from a range of practice contexts in the first part of 2002.

By the middle of the year a final report on the recent review of nursing education in Australia will be delivered to the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training. We, as a profession, need to continue our deliberations on the implications of health and education policies for the sustainable development of nursing and midwifery. We need to continue to contribute to research on issues pertaining to the cost effectiveness of the care processes with which we are involved, the appropriateness of models of care, and, our own cultural competence.

Whilst we strive to be distinctive as a discipline, we need more information on successes in achieving a greater degree of integration and comprehensiveness in our approaches to high quality care. The challenge of publishing is diminishing but we still need more evidence from rigorous research studies that will guide our deliberations on our future directions.

The global shortage of nursing personnel remains an issue. Our efforts to recruit, retain, educate and motivate larger numbers of health service personnel must be ongoing. In pursuit of this goal we need to make even greater investments in the human potential that exists within the profession.

AJAN is part of the effort that is required to extend the available literature and the knowledge base of nurse managers. The National Review of Nursing Education in Australia highlights the fact that the knowledge and skill requirements for nurses are varied in relation to nature and context. Students (undergraduate and graduate) need to be able to access Australian and international

literature that causes them to think about alternatives for the future education, practice and management aspects of the discipline.

Personal qualities, age, maturity, previous experiences, motivation, aspirations, and demographic factors all impact on whether a person will initially choose a nursing career, continue with informal or formal nursing education and remain with the nursing profession. Tenure in one occupation may not be a desirable or sustainable trend for the future. Traditional structures may be maintained at present for no good reason. It may be that more career avenues can and need to be made available to the nurse in lieu of the traditional and institutional arenas. To achieve and maintain a range of job options, identification and redefinition and acceptance of the work nurses' do must be considered and acknowledged.

We also need to achieve a more efficient person-job, person-education match, and therefore improve retention rates in education programs and employment. The identification and definition of the attributes of tomorrow's nurse, the methods of recruitment and factors relating to the selection of potential nurses appropriate to different contexts, need to be examined as a priority.

In some earlier work undertaken with colleagues the focus was on the transition of graduates into the workforce and on their choice of nursing as a career.

One member of the team went on to focus on the qualities required for publicity and aimed at those people thinking about entering university or the technical and further education sector to become nurses. Many authors have suggested that there may be different personal qualities that define categories of school leavers and mature age students. Besides demographic and educational factors, qualities related to motivation, coping ability, hardiness, and, the effects of life experiences warrant further investigation and subsequent publication in journals and other literature.

With the maturing of the discipline within the health and higher education sectors, many academics and educators have increased their publication effort. However, more work needs to be done to encourage output from graduates and those involved in collaborative efforts between the health and higher education sectors. *AJAN* is at the fore with its leadership role in encouraging, through publication, a better understanding of the nature and scope of contemporary nursing practice. I am looking forward to my role as editor of *AJAN*.