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EDITORIAL

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This edition of AJAN is the first anniversary of AJAN going free online from its own website: <http://www.ajan.com.au>. The popularity of the AJAN website in just one year demonstrates clearly the merit of the decision by the Australian Nursing Federation, the publishers of AJAN, to make AJAN freely available online.

On average over the last two issues of AJAN, 50500 manuscripts each month were downloaded from the AJAN website from across every region in the world. This reflects the increased accessibility of manuscripts and is an excellent outcome for authors and their research, exposing predominantly Australian nurse researchers and their research to the international community.

This issue of AJAN contains many interesting, challenging and relevant papers to contemporary nursing care.

Hare et al challenges nurses' capacity to differentiate delirium in hospitalised patients who are confused. If delirium is not accurately diagnosed it goes untreated or is inappropriately treated. Hare et al maintain that nurses have a pivotal role in the early detection of delirium in hospitalised patients in order to reduce associated adverse events such as falls and recommends that nurses are educated to conduct routine cognitive assessments using validated tools in all hospitalised patients in order to differentiate between acute and chronic cognitive conditions.

Using validated assessment tools to improve patient care is also the subject of research by Raja et al who tested nurses' use of nutritional screening tools to assess risk of malnutrition in hospitalised patients. Raja et al found that having validated tools available did not necessarily translate into nursing practice and that demands on nurses' time and nurses' knowledge of nutrition screening were the main barriers to the routine detection of patients at risk of malnutrition.

The expanding role of nurses working in general medical practice is the subject of two research papers in this issue of AJAN. Senior explored the barriers and enablers that nurses working in general medical practice experience in expanding their roles. She found that while role expansion was experienced by over 90% of respondents to her survey and that general medical practitioners were generally supportive of an expanded role for nurses, over half the nurses had to initiate their own role expansion. Mills and Fitzgerald explored why the uptake by nurses of some item numbers on the Medicare Benefits Schedule were greater than others and why there was such a poor uptake by nurses of the cervical screening item number. Recommendations are made that address the barriers identified by the nurses who participated in the research to the process of implementing change in their clinical practice particularly to incorporate the provision of cervical screening services.

In a paper set in an historical context, Chiarella and McInnes explore the legal and ethical frameworks that inform nursing practice and health care cultures. Examples from case law are used to illustrate the relationship between images of nursing and power and how these affect legal and moral frameworks and the realities of the workplace for nurses. Chiarella and McInnes identify five images of nursing which

emerge from case law analysis; images which they maintain are still relevant for nurses today. They argue these images have implications for the way nurses respond to critical situations and contribute to feelings of powerlessness in the workplace which affects nurses' ability to be 'heard' when patient safety is at stake.

Combating powerlessness is a sub-theme in the paper by Watson in her discussion of how leadership is assessed for nurse practitioner candidates in Australia. Watson maintains that leadership is difficult to define and often confused with management; and that the assessment of nurse practitioner candidates for leadership qualities can be subjective and inconsistent. She recommends that, until leadership is clarified with respect to the nurse practitioner role, assessment for leadership qualities should be creative and flexible and recognise that leadership qualities for nurse practitioners may be in a developmental stage.

The potential consequences of the reported world wide shortage of nurses are graphically outlined in a paper by Shields and Watson from the United Kingdom titled: Where have all the nurses gone. Shields and Watson maintain that one consequence of the nursing shortage crisis may well be the disappearance of nurses from the UK health sector as they are replaced by the less costly alternative of health care assistants and technicians. Shields and Watson urge nurses to speak out; to lobby politicians and policy makers; and to use their professional organisations to make sure there is a sustainable nursing workforce for the future.

Enhancing nursing research and nurses' appreciation of research is the subject of another two papers in this issue of AJAN. Gledhill et al reports on sampling methods used to explore older people's attitudes to sexuality. With the increasing ageing of most world wide populations, knowledge of sampling methods which successfully recruit older people is

essential, particularly if the topic is a sensitive one. Gledhill et al share their experiences and make valuable recommendations for future research in older populations. In the other paper, Broomfield focuses on the need for nurses to be able to critically read research papers. A framework is suggested to assist time poor nurses determine the quality of the research they are being asked to incorporate into their practice.

Endometrial carcinoma (cancer of the uterus) is the fifth most common cancer in women world wide and the most common gynaecological cancer. Linford and Forster explored the reactions of women to a diagnosis of endometrial carcinoma and found that women need individualised and accessible education however if they are provided with a variety of educational tools, invariably they can individualise the information they need for themselves. They recommend further research into the psychosocial care of women newly diagnosed with endometrial carcinoma, particularly the allocation of a 'primary nurse' for initial and ongoing contact.

The three international papers in this issue of AJAN all focus on improving patient care in areas which have international applicability to nursing practice. Celik et al explore critical care nurses' knowledge about the care of deceased adult patients in an intensive care unit; Erci et al explore the impact of nurses' therapeutic relationships with their patients on preoperative and postoperative patient anxiety; while Ozdemir and Akdemir examined nurses' knowledge and practice involving patients' resuming sexual activity following myocardial infarction.

After over a decade of professional pressure and political activity, the new Australian Government has established the role of Chief Nurse and Midwifery Officer. Continuing AJAN's series of guest editorial reflections on nursing, the new Australian Chief Nurse and Midwifery Officer shares her nursing story and her aspirations for the role.