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### EDITORIAL

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AJAN Editor

In 2005, the World Health Organization released their guidelines on hand hygiene in health care: Clean hands are safer hands (WHO 2005). According to the WHO, 'one of the most powerful approaches to fighting health care related infections is also the simplest; health care providers need to clean their hands everytime they see a patient'. Nurses have the most contact with patients seeking health care and because of this nurses have a primary responsibility for preventing adverse outcomes due to breaches in hand hygiene. Are nurses committed to hand hygiene? Do they adhere to the WHO guidelines? Do nurses even know the WHO hand hygiene guidelines exist?

The study by van de Mortel aimed to determine the reliability and validity of a hand hygiene questionnaire (HHQ) developed to examine health care students' hand hygiene knowledge, beliefs and practices. The study was conducted with undergraduate students of nursing. The HHQ demonstrated adequate reliability and validity and van de Mortel argues that it should be further tested on a wider sample of health care students with a view to improving nurses' knowledge of and adherence to hand hygiene in all health care settings.

Woodhouse explore the interaction between generalist community nurses and external nursing teams in shared care arrangements in a rural setting. Woodhouse argues that sharing of care between different nursing teams can allow for the improved use of minimal resources available in rural communities. The study generated four themes: a

lack of understanding of each teams' roles; difficulties in communication of information; the importance of setting shared goals in care planning; and the need for collaboration to ensure clarity in case coordination. Results suggest that confusion around roles; skill; communication; care planning; and coordination of care within a shared care model create barriers to the effective sharing of care. Woodhouse suggests that co-location of services could enhance the sharing of care.

In a study based in the UK, Lee examined the effect of comorbid illness on the health related quality of life (HRQoL) of patients after coronary artery bypass graft surgery (CABGS). Lee found that the presence of comorbid illness impacts significantly on physical HRQoL five years after CABGS but no such effect is noted in mental wellbeing. From a nursing perspective, Lee argues that the importance of comorbid illness should be taken into account when planning physical activities after CABGS, when educating patients about the benefits of CABGS, and when setting realistic expectations after surgery.

Continuing the cardiac theme, Fan et al examined cardiac patients' knowledge and use of sublingual glyceryl trinitrate using the Sublingual Nitroglycerin Interview Schedule. They found that patients' have limited knowledge of and do not always appropriately use SLGTN and that there is a need to develop and implement educational strategies to facilitate greater self-management of angina.

In research based in a paediatric outpatient clinic in Turkey, Yildiz et al surveyed parents of children with congenital heart disease to identify factors that influenced their level of distress with a view to raising awareness of the need for health professionals to provide routine psychological and emotion support. The research found that mothers had higher scores than fathers on all distress dimensions and that the

intensity of distress for both mothers and fathers increased with the severity of the child's disease.

Kiyak et al evaluated the impact of the use of wool on the quality of life of patients with fibromyalgia. The study was conducted in two stages with a single-group pre-test/post-test model in a physical therapy and rehabilitation outpatient clinic and in patient's homes in Turkey. The results demonstrated significant improvements in pain score, tender points count, Nottingham Health Profile in all sections, and the Pittsburg Sleep Quality Index and its components, as a result of the use of woollen underwear, woollen bed coverings, woollen mattress cover and woollen cushions in patients with fibromyalgia.

The study by Hill et al, using the latest National Stroke Foundation Clinical Guidelines for Acute Stroke Management, explored which member of the multidisciplinary team would be most likely to take responsibility for the lead role in implementing each recommendation in an effort to determine whether nurses took the lead role. They found that the multidisciplinary team took the lead role most often, followed by medical practitioners and then nurses and that there was a much greater opportunity than was currently being realised for nurses to take the lead role.

The imperative for nursing students to develop critical thinking skills is the basis for the study by Karadag et al who explored the effectiveness of using DeBono's 'six thinking hats' model with a surgical nursing class. The 'six thinking hats' model was used in theoretical lessons about breast cancer, spinal cord trauma and transplantation nursing and the students' opinions were sought about the 'six thinking hats' model of learning. The majority of the students stated that the 'six thinking hats' method of learning facilitated their empathising with the patient; sharing different ideas and opinions; considering the patient holistically; generating creative ideas; looking at an event from positive and negative aspects; and developing their system of thinking. Karadag et al argue that the study is important because it adds to the improvement and enrichment of nursing education

Hargie et al examined cancer patient's 'sensemaking' of conversations with cancer nurses. Their study was designed to investigate how and in what ways patients interpret initial consultations with cancer nurses in terms of how they perceive the role of the nurse. They found that preconceptions of the role of the nurse were limited, with the nurse perceived as playing a mainly functional, task-centred, role. Patients' experience after their conversations with the cancer nurses broadened their sense of the nurses' role to encompass a psychosocial supportive role.

The effect of the presence of nurses on reducing stress in older people resident in two nursing homes in Korea was the subject of research by Gyeong-Ju and Kae-Hwa. The study found that following the intervention, which consisted of structured time with registered nurses over a four week period, stress, problem focused coping, and cortisol levels were significantly improved in the experimental group compared to the control group. The authors concluded that the use of a 'nursing presence' program is an effective intervention for reducing stress and improving problem focused coping in older adult nursing home patients.

Johnstone and Kanitsaki provide a timely reminder about the dangers of demographic alarmism in their paper on the politics of population ageing. The authors examine the prejudices and politics framing current public debate on population ageing in Australia and the possible implications for the allocation of required health and social sector resources. They argue that this view is not supported by the evidence and that the nursing profession has a fundamental role to play in ensuring responsible debate about population ageing and contributing to public policy agenda setting for the effective health and social care of Australia's ageing population.

The study by Piltz and Wachtel aimed to identify the barriers that inhibit nurses reporting suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. Using an integrative review of the literature, they found limited education on recognising signs and symptoms of abuse was a major barrier to reporting. Other barriers include limited experience, poor documentation, low opinion

of child protection services, fear of perceived consequences, and lack of emotional support for nurses through the reporting process. The concluded that the introduction of compulsory mandatory reporting education should be considered for all undergraduate and post graduate nurses in order to reduce identified barriers to reporting and offer greater protection for children, the most vulnerable members of society.

The previously little known contribution of nursing care at the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp is explored in the paper by Ben-Sefer using relevant literature, archival material, correspondence,

diaries, testimonies and personal correspondence. Ben-Sefer argues that the work of doctors has been well publicised, however little has appeared in the literature that details the contribution of nurses. In a moving tribute to the work of the nurses, Ben-Sefer concludes that the work of the nurses during the liberation of Bergen-Belsen was life saving for their patients and life changing for the nurses.

World Health Organization. 2005. Clean hands are safer hands. WHO guidelines on hand hygiene in health care. Available from: <http://www.who.int> (accessed February 2009).