



## EDITORIAL

### Establishing a dialogue in nursing circles

In the last decade, many articles published within academic and professional journals, both at the national and international level, have focused on the gap between nursing knowledge and practice, on the discrepancy between what nursing students learn in the classroom and what they actually encounter during their clinical learning rotations.

Until recently, theory was considered the main driver of practice, and nurses were expected to somehow bridge the gap between clinical practice and research. The following would be an example of such a gap: the difference between a popular nursing textbook's claims about the efficacy of subcutaneous injections administered to patients at risk of thrombo-embolism and their actual efficacy in the clinical setting, where nurses are often called upon to administer as many as 30 injections in a short space of time.

In recent years we have begun to seriously reconsider the role of clinical nursing practice, and to acknowledge the unique value of nurses' clinical judgment, knowledge, and intuition, as well as their effort to deliver care suited to the needs of the individual patient. We have also recognized that in practice a lot of patients' problems have no theoretical solutions. To get back to the case of the heparin injection, all clinical nurses have experienced the occurrence of abdominal bruises in patients subsequent to administering subcutaneous injections. Different strategies have been adopted to reduce these adverse effects, effects which can cause discomfort, anxiety and concern, erode a patients' trust in nurses' competence and in the therapeutic value of the injections, and possibly lead to a refusal of treatment. Unfortunately, among the recently published literature, there are few articles about the most effective strategy we should adopt to reduce the occurrence of bruises, and the problem remains open. Moreover, those studies that have been published have certain limitations. They do not involve sufficient numbers of patients (not more than 50); the patients included tend to have particular clinical conditions (e.g., cardiological problems, stroke); and for the most part they are not designed to take into account other factors influencing the occurrence of bruises, e.g. coagulation stability, which is largely altered in older people who receive antiplatelets or anticoagulants. This means that the available knowledge is still partial and not valid in every clinical setting.

In the new era we seem to be entering, practice is beginning to drive knowledge development, because research has failed to come up with solutions to some crucial problems which nurses face in their daily activities. In their clinical practice, nurses gain first-hand experience of new problems and challenges which need to be addressed by research. The solutions they devise, often on their feet, can be the starting point for research, which could go on to either validate them or suggest modifications. We as a profession face a new and thrilling era: nurses at the academic, clinical and administrative levels have a unique opportunity to forge a feedback loop between nursing knowledge and practice, eliminating old fashioned polarities which have not contributed to the real advancement of nursing practice.

In such a climate, having a journal and contributing to its advancement is vital. Nurses can begin to write up their clinical cases within a scientific framework, while engaging the work of researchers. For their part, researchers might develop research queries around these clinical cases, in effect working collaboratively with clinical nurses. Nurses at the administrative level, who have the difficult task of creating and maintaining the best organizational conditions where nurses can work effectively, might participate in this dialogue by reporting upon health service issues. Clinical nurses can discuss and evaluate published articles in light of their experience on the wards, applying on their own patients the interventions reported in the published articles that they deem most promising.

Creating a dialogue within a community of nurses through a journal helps forge international connections and networks which can create new opportunities and challenges for research collaboration, and for the exchange of clinical experience, ultimately leading to the advancement of nursing care, which is our foremost concern both at the national and international level.

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