January 2008

TouchPOINTS

UBC School of Nursing

PUTTING SCHOLARSHIP INTO PRACTICE

Interprofessional Interconnectivity

Dr. Sally Thorne

As the School of Nursing matures, its members are increasingly demonstrating their capacity to take leadership in an array of large, complex initiatives intended to solve some of the more pressing and difficult problems influencing the health of our society.

Although nursing has always upheld a strong core value related to working within interprofessional teams and translating information between various disciplines or stakeholders in the health world, its early history was also characterized by an expectation of operating within a supportive rather than a true leadership capacity. Armed with clarity of thought as to what a unique nursing "angle of vision" represents, nurse leaders today have become highly capable of engaging their disciplinary perspective in a more proactive and targeted manner to catalyze strategic approaches to complex problem-solving at growing levels of magnitude.

Dr. Sally Thorne with Drs. Charmaine Kim-Sing (radiation oncology), Susan Harris (physical therapy) and John Oliffe (nursing), some of the members of her interdisciplinary cancer communication research team.

Within the School, we see numerous examples of faculty building lasting and sustained partnerships across health and social service disciplines, within the applied and basic sciences, and with governments, health authorities and public planners. The era of individual research projects is rapidly being replaced by a mandate to engage and involve the full spectrum of stakeholders with an investment not only in new knowledge but also in stewarding its translation into the practice or policy context. Our clinical projects are expanding into models for re-envisioning how complex systems such as primary health care or professional practice education could be engineered differently within a new and reformed system of accountabilities and expectations. It is a time for "big thinkers" and a time in which nursing's fundamental way of approaching complexity is of considerable interest to others seeking real solutions to real problems.

At the UBC School of Nursing, we take great pride in our nursing identity, and in the unique and distinctive shared vision for a better world that our discipline's core principles and practices afford us. And we are progressively more confident that the rest of the world has started to recognize what nursing contributes to making this world a better place.

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Raising the Bar

Inspiring the Future with Excellence Today

Faculty members in the UBC School of Nursing are all exceptionally committed to the nursing profession and to excellence within their own particular sphere of influence. Their talents and skills are as diverse as nursing itself, and they routinely advance new knowledge and stretch professional practice to expand the ways in which nursing makes a difference in the health care system and beyond.

Cathy Ebbehoj with her Award of Excellence from AWHONN.

While the incredible endowments of the entire faculty are recognized on a daily basis, sometimes the external world takes special interest in particular accomplishments and affords them special recognition. Three faculty members, exemplifying quite different branches of leading edge nursing excellence, have recently won prestigious awards.

Dr. Bernie Garrett, Assistant Professor, was awarded the UBC 2007 Richard A. Spencer Award for Information Technology Innovation. This award recognizes outstanding innovation and creativity in information technology at UBC. Bernie teaches a variety of courses at the undergraduate and graduate level including nursing informatics. "I wanted to create something for students to use that would easily and quickly link them in their clinical practice to the university," says Bernie. He along with a strong team of colleagues, developed the Mobile Clinical e-Portfolio, a set of personal digital assistant (PDA) tools incorporating clinical reference applications and a clinical e-portfolio system, by which students can wirelessly log on to record their clinical activity remotely. With the development of these tools, faculty, students and their clinical mentors can access an online student portfolio to record achievements, comment on journal entries and record practicum placement activity.

Bernie Garrett receives the Richard A. Spencer award from Ted Dodds, CIO and Associate Vice-President Information Technology (UBC IT). Photo: Martin Dee.

"This project would not have reached this stage without the help of the faculty and information technology staff here at the School," says Bernie. "Nor would I have even been able to seriously contemplate the idea without Sally Thorne encouraging the pursuit of technological advancements for students in the School."

Students and colleagues have played an equally foundational role in stimulating expertise in a different direction for Cathy Ebbehoj, BSN '75, MSN '99, Lecturer in the School of Nursing, and another recent award winner. Cathy is the recipient of the 2007 Canada Award of Excellence from the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses. This honour recognizes Cathy's outstanding contribution to the care of women, mothers, newborns and families, and the passion with which she has influenced others towards the highest standards of care. "The families and my students both past and present energize me," says Cathy. "The students question my ideas related to maternity care and teaching and challenge me to think about these in new and different ways."

For Cathy it is all about working with and learning from others. "When I came to teach at the School of Nursing, I partnered with wonderful faculty mentors who helped me to expand my views of working with childbearing families." It was, and is, the support of these mentors and of the School that has allowed Cathy to serve the community to the extent she has.

Building and sharing an evidentiary basis for the nursing profession and the health problems of society are what drives Dr. Pam Ratner's nursing practice. As a Professor in the School, and a Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research Senior Scholar, Pam was recently inducted into the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. This prestigious honour is restricted to a select few who have established themselves as world class research scholars as well as professional leaders in advancing the academic health sciences. Involvement by faculty such as Pam in national initiatives to solve the pressing health problems of the day ensures that the UBC School of Nursing remains on the forefront of relevance and vision.

As each of these award winners would attest, such accomplishments are not attributable to brilliance alone, but also to the kind of exceptional scholarly community that nurtures and supports creativity, innovation and action. The School has a sustained commitment to remaining the kind of community from which such excellence routinely emerges among our faculty, staff and students. We celebrate these successes and acknowledge the dozens of everyday miracles that grow out of our commitment to serve.

Social Pediatrics

The initial model for social pediatrics, developed by Dr. Gilles Julien in Montreal, was designed to complement existing tertiary and primary services and provide care to those children who are most vulnerable. Dr. Julien stresses the importance of working with the natural borders of a child's community, such as the school.

Interprofessional Collaboration and Innovation

Accessing the Community to Raise the Child

As health care providers, what happens when we recognize that the predisposition to health problems is attributable to an increasingly wide array of factors? Research now tells us that social conditions (e.g., poverty and family disruption) can create and magnify disparities in both physical and mental health. "Poor health in children is cumulative over the life course," says Dr. Judy Lynam, Associate Professor, "and many of the conditions that contribute to poor health in children are preventable. In our traditional system of care, treatments are frequently focused on symptoms rather than root causes." Through their work in *social pediatrics*, Judy and her colleagues are developing industry partnerships and programs that will engage with the child, the family and the community to identify and address conditions that contribute to inequities in health.

"I think one of the central ideas inherent in social pediatrics is that it recognizes and seeks to respond to the child and family's social context in the way care is organized and provided." The key to this approach is creating enduring supportive relationships for children while working in partnership with other community-based organizations to ensure continuities in care and access to services from early childhood, through school age and into youth and young adulthood. "My own research with immigrant children has demonstrated the ways that being on the social margins of society can erode or undermine relationships," says Judy. "A general premise is that many of the stresses faced by immigrant families arise out of, or are compounded by, poverty, so an additional focus is to seek to ensure that families have the resources they need."

The original team included Judy, Ranjit Dhari, a community health nurse, and Andrea Scott Richardson, a community educator. After an initial meeting with nurse leaders, they undertook a needs assessment and created a working document to share with key community stakeholders. This led to a partnership with Dr. Christine Loock, a developmental pediatrician who works with children in the Downtown Eastside. Others, who hold key roles in the community, such as nurses associated with the Sheway program (a partnership initiative to provide health and social services to women who are either pregnant or parenting a child less than 18 months of age, or who have or have had issues with substance use) and Dr. Fitzgerald have also been engaged. Viewed as filling an important gap in child health services, Judy and her team's initiative have garnered support from medical and nursing leaders across the region. From the outset, the team has also engaged in active dialogue with a number of community-based organizations, including the Network of East Vancouver Community Organizations, the Ray Cam Community Co-operative, and Vancouver Native Health. "The community partners have been key as they have longstanding relationships with the community and they know the people," says Judy.

This past October, the Coordinated Community Child Health Services Initiative, based in the Ray Cam Community Co-operative, started in Vancouver. Lorinne Scott, a family nurse practitioner is starting work on an outreach model to build relationships and establish a presence in the community. A community and professional advisory committee meets with Lorinne regularly to explore ways to provide support and to capture how best to enact the model.

Long term goals for this work include capturing what's important in this type of approach that can form the basis of health professional education, and be drawn upon to inform approaches in other communities. "This has been a wonderful experience from the outset," says Judy. "We start small and build relationships. It's about being accessible and responsive and mobilizing resources that are appropriate for a particular child."

Did You Know?

Current nationally funded research projects headed by UBC School of Nursing faculty members consist of co-investigators from a wide range of disciplines including: family practice, epidemiology, oncology, psychology, psychiatry, gerontology, psychometrics, rehabilitation sciences, bioethics, pedagogy, journalism, midwifery, criminology, sociology, political science and community development.

Graduate Profile

Uncovering Insights in the Student Experience

Jeff Dyck, BSN '03, MSN '07, currently a full-time teacher in the BSN program at BCIT and a textbook writer and editor for Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, became intrigued with the possibilities of nursing during after-work conversations with his wife. "My wife is a nurse in labour and delivery and I was an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher. At the end of each day, her work stories would always be more interesting than mine because she was directly involved in people's lives, experiencing major life transitions with them."

During his undergraduate studies, Jeff noticed female students significantly outnumbered the males. "Literature tells us that only five per cent of practicing nurses and nine per cent of nursing students are male," he says. "It was the first time in my life I was in a minority position and it tweaked my interest." Jeff began to wonder what the underlying reasons were for this, and what others who had studied gender in nursing had found. He wondered how nurse educators plan and execute educational strategies that reach a diversity of students when only one in 10 nursing students is male.

Armed with a competitive research operating grant from the Katherine McMillan Director's Discretionary Fund and a supervisory committee, Jeff embarked on his thesis research—a qualitative study exploring the teaching and learning experiences of male students and nursing instructors. "Students were very interested in sharing their experiences with me," says Jeff. "I had to reconfigure the study to incorporate the experiences they shared from their clinical placements as well as classroom learning." For example, in clinical situations, male students found they had to adapt some of their behaviours, especially around issues of touch. In some instances, such as maternity units, agency staff expected them to accept different learning opportunities than those of their female counterparts.

According to Jeff, the male nursing student experience remains complicated with a number of paradoxes. "Some of my findings can bring attention to the issue of gender balance in nursing education. So, let's look at it critically and see why gender imbalance is still happening in nursing. Let's stimulate discussion collectively as a profession and determine what we can do to bring this issue more to the forefront." What Jeff hopes his study will contribute is the conviction that there is a valuable and appropriate place for men in nursing.

Jeff and his daughter, Amelia, vacationing on Galiano Island.

Although further graduate studies may lie in his future, for the moment Jeff's enthusiasm lies in teaching. "I am interested in education," he says, "and a more direct interaction with students." That interaction includes his work in writing and editing. "Undergraduate students still spend much of their time with textbooks, and I hope to further the inclusion of thoughtful prose into textbooks through my work as a textbook writer and editor."

Jeff aspires to produce graduates who are ready to meet the challenges inherent in the current trends of society and to advocate for high quality patient care. "As educators, there is a lot we can contribute to help our students understand the reality of the nursing and health care systems." We might imagine that Jeff's after-work conversations are now doubly inspired!

Kelsa in her maternity placement at BC Children's and Women's Hospital, Vancouver, 2006.

Undergraduate Profile

Creating a Kit Bag of Experiences for a Future in Nursing

As long as I'm working with infants, children and youth, I know I'm in the right place. Kelsa Laughlin, BSN '07

Kelsa had every intention of becoming a physician. After the third year of her undergraduate program in biology, she decided to travel to the Philippines to do volunteer work on the islands of Bohol and Cebu. There, her experiences with Visayas Primary Health Care Services, a non-governmental organization focusing on rural and primary health care, changed the course of her life.

"I worked with many doctors, nurses and midwives, and even lay people trained as community health workers," she says. "Over the span of four months it not only strengthened my desire to be in the health care field, but it showed me first-hand how many different roles you can play in primary care." Although the doctors developed close relationships with their clients, it was the holistic interpersonal relationships the nurses fostered that most attracted Kelsa. "They had a different kind of continuity of care," she says, "and the nurses were highly respected. It really opened my eyes to the integral role nurses play in health care."

(cont'd on bottom of page 5)

Research Profile

National Research Leadership

Dr. Joy Johnson, a Professor in the School of Nursing, has made a major new addition to her professorial activities. As of January 1, 2008, she assumed a major national leadership role as Scientific Director for the Institute of Gender and Health of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). The position of Scientific Director within CIHR is offered to individuals who have an outstanding record of scientific achievement within a particular area of focus, and have a stellar background in both leadership and research development.

Building upon her experience helping to develop NEXUS (a multidisciplinary research unit focused on the social context of health behaviour) and NAHBR (the School's Nursing and Health Behaviour Research Unit), Joy has contributed considerable voluntary time to academic development through roles such as chairing the Research Advisory Committee for the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research and chairing the UBC Senate's Teaching and Learning Committee. "In the School of Nursing my experiences as PhD Coordinator, and later as Associate Director for Graduate Programs and Research, helped me gain an appreciation for the complex task of developing research programs and effective graduate training experiences," says Joy.

Although a significant portion of Joy's time will be devoted to national research leadership for the next five-year period, and her travel commitments will take her off campus for considerable periods, her appointment will also bring many positive dimensions to UBC and to the School. "As Scientific Director I will have the opportunity to meet key researchers from across the country and will be in a position to foster links between faculty members at UBC and researchers country-wide. I think it is key that nurses assume leadership positions in the CIHR," says Joy. "We have a lot to contribute."

Working with the Institute Advisory Board and in consultation with researchers and trainees across the country, Joy intends to develop new strategic directions for the Institute including working toward reducing gender-based inequities in health care. "Closing the gap involves understanding the ways in which biological sex-related factors affect the development and progress of disease and how social or gender-related factors influence appropriate and timely access to health care and self-care practices," says Joy.

Joy Johnson

"My appointment reflects positively on the School of Nursing at UBC in that it demonstrates it is a context that fosters research leadership. I think the appointment is also good for the nursing profession in that it signals that nurses are contenders for key leadership positions."

We agree, and look forward to the spotlight that this role will place on the university as a whole, and on the School of Nursing's capacity to nurture and support exceptional national leaders.

Entering the advanced standing degree program at the UBC School of Nursing, Kelsa especially enjoyed her clinical courses in public health, working with infants, children and youth. On graduation this past summer, she immediately entered a float position at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa, where she is able to work with clients from birth to 18 years of age across all units of the hospital.

"There's something about kids and their energy," says Kelsa. "They are amazing creatures. They don't choose to be sick and yet they're so resilient. When I know they are in a facility or getting treatment, I have a need to make their experience as good as it can be." Kelsa chose Ottawa for her placement for a few reasons: the travel bug did bite in the Philippines and she knew Ottawa would open new horizons; she can further develop her bilingual skills with French refresher courses offered by the hospital, thus expanding future career opportunities; and she is also close at hand to be aunt to her brother's young twins.

During her biology studies at the University of Victoria, Kelsa had minored in Indigenous Studies. It was natural, therefore, for her to take her final clinical nursing course at the Public Health Unit in Terrace, BC. There, she worked with children, conducted neonatal home visits and facilitated teaching sessions for First Nations prenatal groups. "I was welcomed into all aspects of people's lives while up north," she says, "and I was moved by how much they nurture new babies. There is cohesiveness in the community and everyone works as a team to take care of the little ones."

While in the UBC nursing program, Kelsa felt taken care of herself when she received the Flora S. Musgrave Award in 2006. "I felt honoured. Receiving the scholarship gave me the extra push to keep going because I knew someone had acknowledged the hard work I'd done, and I wanted to make them proud."

The future for Kelsa is limitless, and she is grateful for the opportunities her UBC BSN degree has afforded her. "I love the values behind illness prevention and community-based health, and will definitely want to focus in the area of primary care and health promotion," she says. "One day I would like to implement primary health care centres and involve community members of all ages." Once she gains valuable clinical assessment and practice skills in the hospital context over the next few years, Kelsa envisions volunteering abroad again. Graduate study may also be in her future. For now, Kelsa is thrilled to be informing her nursing practice with the life experiences she has already had.

"There is so much open to new nursing graduates today," she says, "I get so excited dreaming of all the paths I am qualified to pursue." The School is energized by new graduates like Kelsa who exemplify the exciting career future that emerges from a visionary educational base.

New Faces in Research

The Voice of the Child

Dr. Gladys McPherson, Assistant Professor, is committed to child health. Her particular passion is ensuring children's voices are heard, especially in matters pertaining to health care. "The starting point for me is how we see children in our society and in our health care system," says Gladys. Throughout her professional career Gladys has been involved in pediatric nursing, sustained by a concern for ensuring that we never lose sight of the well-being of children and their families.

Gladys earned her PhD from the UBC nursing doctoral program, and is excited at the opportunity to expand her involvement with the School in the faculty role. "It's a good match for me," she says. "Quite a few faculty members have expertise in various aspects of child health. I look forward to building on the intersections where child health, ethics, communication and critical inquiry meet." Maintaining her focus on how we see children as members of society, Gladys will direct her program of research toward associations between health and social determinants of health such as poverty, posing questions such as "How does poverty manifest itself in a child's opportunity to receive appropriate health care?"

Gladys McPherson

"I have a penchant for the study of children and a concern that issues related to their well-being are addressed." Gladys McPherson

Helen Brown and daughter Frances (son Ben not shown).

The Maternal-Child Mandate

Dr. Helen Brown, Assistant Professor, has an abiding passion for the health and ethical care of childbearing women, infants and families. "After working for several years as a neonatal transport nurse for critically ill newborns and labouring mothers," says Helen, "I developed a deep appreciation for the complex experience of living with particular threats to health and well-being in pregnancy and the newborn period." It also introduced Helen to the importance of examining the connection between ethical maternal-infant care and the broader social forces shaping nursing practice and women's health experiences and outcomes of maternal-infant care.

In her doctoral work at the University of Victoria, Helen advanced the understanding of the impact of health care relationships on maternal and infant care. Understanding the complex social context of such relationships for childbearing women and their infants also helps Helen appreciate how relations between health care providers and women influence maternal-infant health outcomes.

Helen's future research will examine the social context of maternal-infant care, the complex construction of health care relationships and the particular health impact they have on women and their babies. She is thrilled to have joined the UBC School of Nursing. Helen says "I am keen to become an active part of the strong teaching, scholarship and research in ethics and maternal-infant care and the School's mandate for putting scholarship into practice."

"Inquiry into everyday care of women and infants is a critical site from which to evolve maternal-infant nursing practice." Helen Brown

Development

Leaving a Living Legacy

Janet Gormick, RN, BSc, MSN, Assistant Professor Emerita, who passed away on April 27, 2006, was a dedicated member of the School of Nursing faculty for 26 years. She played an active role in the development of the UBC Model for Nursing, worked on curriculum building and theory development, and supported clinical practice in psychiatry as well as community and family health.

"Janet was one of my teachers in the post-RN program," says Kathy O'Flynn-Magee, BSN '98, MSN '02, currently a Lecturer in the School. Kathy thinks the feedback Janet gave her on her final conceptual paper was foundational to her belief in herself, and her subsequent professional career. "She implied through her comments that I had the potential to move forward to graduate work." Kathy remembers that message each year at convocation when she wears the academic gown Janet passed down to her.

"Janet was involved in the history of nursing in order to appreciate the context in which nursing developed and grew toward uncovering and increasing its theoretical base," says Emerita faculty member, Dr. Mary Regester. "She understood that nursing is essentially the backbone of the health care system and was desirous of inculcating this knowledge and value in the students she taught." Mary remembers how Janet's sense of humour enlivened her interactions with her students and colleagues.

Emerita faculty member, Helen Shore, remembers that students looked up to Janet's wisdom and fund of knowledge, and that Janet thoroughly enjoyed her work with students. "When it came time to talk about her will, Janet thought about her own days as a student," says Helen. "She received a number of awards and scholarships and reflected on how much they meant to her, saying, 'If it hadn't been for awards, I never could have gone to school.' I think she wanted to leave a similar legacy to students." According to Helen, the ideal recipients will not only love learning, but will want to contribute in some way to developing nursing knowledge and practice.

The inaugural recipients of The Janet Gormick Memorial Scholarships, one each year for an undergraduate and a graduate student, are Sonia Orenchuk and Lyle Grant, respectively.

Sonia says the award will motivate her academically and will inspire her to cultivate her nursing skills and philosophy (along with relieving the anxiety associated with increasing costs of education). "I felt extremely honoured and privileged to be the recipient of this award. I was told a little about Janet Gormick and realize she was an exceptional person. Not only was her friendship dear to faculty members, but she was also very dedicated to and involved in the School."

"Receiving this kind of scholarship helps to boost a sense of recommitment to my academic work," says Lyle Grant, BSN '04, MSN '07, a doctoral student whose particular passion is finding ways in which nursing can contribute to improving the health trajectories of persons with severe mental illness. "I look forward to my research making valuable contributions to health promotion and health services provision to a variety of disenfranchised or vulnerable populations."

Janet Gormick (1940-2006): "She was constantly seeking knowledge," says Mary Regester.

Sonia Orenchuk (left), undergraduate recipient

Lyle Grant (right) remains close to practice while pursuing doctoral studies through his part-time work on a palliative care unit.

Make a Donation

If you are interested in creating a bursary, establishing a scholarship, funding critical research, purchasing clinical equipment or creating a special project, I would be pleased to discuss the many ways you can help the School ensure high quality education for the next generation of nurses. Please call me for a confidential appointment.

CELESTE TAYLOR, Major Gifts Officer
(604) 822-9959

Alumni Action

Do you have a story to tell? Do you know of alumni who ought to be featured in this section? School of Nursing Director, Sally Thorne currently serves as faculty representative to the Alumni Association Board of Directors.

Please visit our alumni page (http://www.nursing.ubc.ca/About_Us/Alumni.htm) and offer feedback on what you would like to see listed.

Mark your 2008 calendars for the next alumni lunch event which occurs over UBC's alumni weekend, May 23-25, 2008.

Career Reflections

Global Neuroscience

As they leave the School and head out into the world of professional practice, UBC Nursing alumni embark on a remarkable diversity of careers. While every one of our graduates makes a profound contribution to the health of society, some find themselves in roles that are particularly inspirational.

Marjorie Ratel, BSN '95, is a case in point. As a neuroscience staff nurse at Vancouver General Hospital (VGH) since 1978, a nurse clinician in gerontology in the Fraser Health region and a policy development consultant at the Pentecostal Broadway Lodge, Marjorie is in constant contact with the varied issues affecting the nervous system. Marjorie's interest in the challenges of access to quality health care began when she met Dr. Thomas Dakurah, a young neurosurgeon from Ghana taking advanced training at VGH in 1999. Marjorie and three other VGH nurses founded the Korle-Bu Neuroscience Project in 2000, with the intent of supporting neurosurgical nurses in Ghana. Witnessing the severe shortages in medical and allied health neuroscience care, education and relevant equipment during a 2002 trip to Ghana, Marjorie and others expanded the scope of the initial project. The BC-based team and its volunteers have shipped five million dollars worth of donated supplies and equipment to the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital in Accra, Ghana.

Marjorie Ratel along with architects from Builders without Borders, Roger Hughes and Neil Griggs, and neuro-anesthesiologist, Mitch Giffen, develops the hospital's conceptual design.

Under the auspices of the UBC School of Nursing, four Ghanaian nurses from the Korle-Bu hospital acquired specialized neurology/neurosurgery training at VGH in 2004. "My goal is to establish a Centre of Excellence in Neurosurgery and Clinical Neurosciences that will provide high quality health care, not only by building a well equipped specialized centre, but also by providing highly trained professionals in all the required fields," says Marjorie. "The ultimate aim of the centre is to form the nucleus for the dissemination of neuroscience care, its teaching, training and research for sub-Saharan West Africa, home to 275 million people."

Marjorie was recognized this past November by the UBC Alumni Association with its Global Citizenship Award. "I choose to work on this project because I am helping to fill a dire need," says Marjorie. "I am thrilled to know that the value of this project for the population of West Africa is being acknowledged by this award."

Marjorie maintains her ties with UBC through her involvement with the International Relations Department. While inspiring medical and nursing colleagues and members of the university community to become involved in The Korle-Bu Neuroscience Project, Marjorie is bringing them a global perspective on health. To find out more please visit: http://kbnf.org/index.html.

TouchPOINTS

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