



EDITORIAL

LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

Emeritus Professor Dr Norma Chick PE RGON RM PhD, FCNA, has been a member of the Editorial Group of Nursing Praxis in New Zealand from the inception of “Nursing Praxis” in 1985 to the present day (2016). One can only marvel at this length of service of a great, disciplined and logical mind, and her determination to advance the profession of nursing as a discipline in its own right. Reflecting on the early issues of Nursing Praxis in New Zealand my mind goes back to my early associations with Norma.

Alongside Dr Nan Kinross, Norma began the first post-registration, advanced education for registered nurses in New Zealand at Massey University, Palmerston North. In their co-authored book *Chalk & Cheese* (2006) both wrote of the struggles they experienced to establish nursing in the university environment. Starting in 1973 as a small unit within the Department of Psychology with three students nursing grew quickly, helped by the strong interest shown by New Zealand nurses in furthering their education, and Massey University’s mandate to provide extramural studies throughout the country.

The entry requirement for university nursing studies in the 1970s was a nursing registration. Local students could study “internally”, attending weekly classes, but the majority of students, myself included, had to take the extramural option. Our studies were undertaken by mail, with study guides and set readings arriving at regular intervals. The study guide content was comprehensive and it spelt out step by step what was required of the student. They were the forerunners to other types of study at a distance, forecasting contemporary forms such as e-learning. Each “paper” included compulsory on-campus courses of intensive lectures, tutorials, group projects and tests. On-campus courses were gruelling but

also exciting. Through the paper on Nursing Knowledge Norma introduced me and hundreds of other nurses to nursing theory and research. She can be credited with influencing the mind-set of a whole generation of nurses from thinking of nursing as only a practical occupation supported by procedural knowledge to one that is scientifically based on sound evidence to provide a clear rationale for nursing judgements and actions.

From the outset, Norma introduced students to the importance of building a distinctive body of knowledge that would establish nursing as a discipline in its own right. Discipline was defined as “a unique perspective, a distinct way of viewing all phenomena which ultimately defines the limits and nature of its inquiry” (Donaldson & Crowley, 1978, p.113). Norma taught that received knowledge while it supported a vocational perception of nursing, was inadequate to provide the foundation for a scientific discipline. Thus began our journey of discovery – introduction to philosophy, logic, and exposure to conceptual frameworks and to theories of nursing, mainly those developed by American nurse scholars such as Henderson, Orem, Roy, Rogers, and others, and most importantly our own search for a definition of nursing.

Norma was also a superb research supervisor as early students moved on to graduate studies and began conducting clinical research in nursing. Her capacity to challenge students to think critically, to write incisively, and to defend their views by references to research evidence and careful reasoning was legendary. It is these qualities that she also brought to her editorial board work for Nursing Praxis.

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Under Norma's instruction, nurses developed an ability to think critically about their practice and to consider the importance of theory development and research. These two activities were essential if nursing was to rise as a discipline in its own right. The latter did not just happen; nurses had to be taught to think differently.

I recall the struggle in Norma's paper *Nursing Knowledge* reading and trying to understand conceptual and theoretical frameworks as a way to view person, health, nurse, and environment; the four key conceptual areas viewed as the means to "organise facts, principles and theories" (Doheny, Cook, & Stopper, 1997, p. 7) for the delivery of nursing care. Moreover the importance of research as a means of analysis and resolution of nursing care problems and a way to discover new knowledge or to validate what is already known. However, in Norma's mind "theory and research were inextricably connected and it was difficult to think one without the other" (Chick, & Kinross, 2006, p. 130).

If the fortitude and persistence of both Norma and Nan in those early days of developing nursing as a scientific and clinical discipline in the New Zealand context of advanced education had not continued, nursing in New Zealand would not be where it is today. Their self-belief and persistence in the face of many challenges has served the profession of nursing admirably. The status of nursing in New Zealand today is a testimony to the early work of Norma as one of its academic pioneers.

Today, a bachelor's degree is the entry qualification for nursing practice in New Zealand, and reading and understanding research and the research process is part of every nurse's undergraduate nursing education. Research and theory development (usually in the form of grounded theory) is undertaken at the Masters and Doctoral Degree level by increasing numbers of nurses completing postgraduate degrees. Much of what we in nursing education today take for granted must be credited to the foundational work that Norma and other

"trailblazers" laid down a generation ago and sustained through contributions such as Norma's work on *Nursing Praxis* journal.

Norma was never one to "rest on her laurels"; always looking to what needed to be done next. We should learn from her. The work of nursing scholarship and development of the discipline is not done! As Dr. Stephen Neville, in a 2013 *Nursing Praxis* editorial reminded its readers, too many nurses are failing to take the final step in the research process - that of publication. Too few nurses are adding to the repository of nursing knowledge by publishing the outcomes of their research. Published research is vital to the development of the profession and to nursing practice. Nursing as a profession cannot develop if our research and scholarly work remain unpublished, unavailable to others, and not open to critique and testing in clinical practice.

In an early *Nursing Praxis* editorial, Dr Norma Chick issued a challenge: "Advanced education in nursing promises to play a transforming role in bringing about the full integration of nursing into health care planning. Let us make it happen" (Chick, 1989, p. 4). Has it happened? The same challenge is important in 2016 if the people of New Zealand are to benefit from the advancement of nursing knowledge and its full contribution to the planning, design and delivery of health care.

Dr Louise Rummel RN PhD with input from Dr Irena Madjar, RN PhD.

**Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Nursing and Health Studies, Manukau Institute
of Technology**



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