

**EDITORIAL**

## **CJNR and Other Canadian Independent Nursing Journals Under Threat**

After 42 years of continuous publication, *CJNR* (*Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*) is under threat, along with six other independent nursing and health journals. A major source of the Journal's operating funding is being withdrawn. In order to survive we need your support.

In 2009 *CJNR* marked its ruby anniversary — its 40th year of continuous publication. This would be a remarkable achievement for any journal, but it was a particularly remarkable achievement for an academic journal that is one of the few to still be housed and published by a university, in this case McGill University, in the School of Nursing.

*CJNR*, originally called *Nursing Papers*, was founded in 1969 as a forum for the exchange of scholarly ideas among nurses across our vast country. This was a time when nursing research was in its infancy. There were just a handful of nurse scholars and a handful of universities offering master's programs. The establishment of doctoral programs in nursing was decades away. There were no peer-reviewed journals to disseminate the work of nurse researchers in this country. In 1974 *Nursing Papers* transitioned into a nursing research journal and its name was changed to *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*.

Over the past three decades, nursing research has grown at an exponential rate as universities have expanded their graduate programs, the number of doctorate-prepared nurses has risen substantially, and nurse scholars have developed research programs. *CJNR*, as Canada's premier nursing research journal, has capitalized on the talents, skills, and expertise of leading Canadian nurse scholars who have served as guest editors, reviewers, and authors to further the dissemination of nursing research for the betterment of patient care. For a more detailed history, see my editorial titled "CJNR Celebrates Its Ruby Anniversary" (Gottlieb, 2009).

The majority of research journals founded in universities have ended up in for-profit publishing houses. The journals were established by a professor or group of professors employed by a university. These were small businesses whose editors were required to have not only the academic credentials and skills necessary to select quality manuscripts but also the managerial skills needed to produce and finance a journal. One by

one, academic journals succumbed and were taken over by large, commercial publishing houses. Academics often lost control of their own journals as the publishing company moved in.

In Canada, six of the country's eight academic and professional nursing journals are published by universities or professional associations. The other two are published by small for-profit enterprises.

In the United States the situation is quite different. In that country there are 65 nursing journals and all are published by for-profit companies. However, three publishers in effect control the market.

Another significant trend in the publishing world related to the financing of journals is the move to open access. Open access means that a journal is free: One does not need a paid subscription in order to access its articles. Often, instead of readers paying to read the articles, authors are asked to pay to have their articles published. There are problems with this economic model, the primary one being that not all authors have the money to pay to be published (Gottlieb, 2005).

At *CJNR* we have remained an independent publication. Over the years we have been able to finance the Journal through subscription fees, copyright fees, and a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, a federal agency. Twenty-five years ago *CJNR* received its first grant from Aid to Learned Journals, an arm of SSHRC. Every 3 years since, we have been awarded the largest amount granted through this competition. In the meantime, *CJNR* has been making a significant contribution to the development of nursing research in Canada and to the understanding of the social and emotional impact of illness. The Journal plays an important role in providing scholars with a vehicle through which to disseminate their research, as evidenced by the large number of submissions we receive each year. *CJNR*'s impact is indicated by its ranking within Ingenta, a major online publisher of journals in all fields: We consistently rank in the top 30 to 50 most downloaded of Ingenta's 17,000 publications — and we are the only nursing journal in this top ranking.

Some 4 months ago, just as we were preparing for another grant competition, we were informed indirectly that SSHRC had changed its mandate and had decided that nursing and other health journals would be ineligible to compete for funding. The reason given was that suddenly nursing and health journals no longer fell under SSHRC's mandate, even though, clearly, nursing research examines issues that belong in the human and social science lines of inquiry. SSHRC argues that journals such as ours should be funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, even though CIHR does not perform this function and has no intention of doing so in the foreseeable future. This leaves *CJNR* and the

other independent nursing and health journals “between a rock and a hard place,” with no source of public funding to which we can even apply.

Without the SSHRC grant, *CJNR* is in jeopardy.

In February I wrote a letter of protest to Ms. Bryde Kelly, Program Officer at SSHRC, outlining the reasons why we should be eligible for funding under SSHRC’s own mandate and, more broadly, SSHRC’s moral obligations with respect to the funding of nursing and health journals. My letter and SSHRC’s response can be found on our Web site at [www.cjnr.mcgill.ca](http://www.cjnr.mcgill.ca) as well as on the Canadian Nurses Association’s Web site at [www.cna-nursing.ca](http://www.cna-nursing.ca).

What to do in both the short term and the long term to ensure our viability as a research journal?

### **Immediate Implications for the Viability of *CJNR***

The *CJNR* board met to discuss the situation and to regroup so that we could continue to publish. The immediate task was to see where we could cut costs. *CJNR* publishes both print and online versions. This is a costly venture. The most obvious solution was to reduce and then cut the print version. Beginning with this issue, the print version of the Journal is being reduced by 30% and the remaining content is being published online only. We will be eliminating our print version entirely: Beginning with the March 2012 issue, *CJNR* will be available online only; our last print issue will be December 2011.

### **Planning for the Future**

Looking further into the future, we will be exploring alternative business models of funding the Journal. The future is uncertain, but what we do know is that we need to find innovative, creative ways to fund the dissemination of quality, peer-reviewed research.

Last week I met with the editors of *Canadian Nurse*, official publication of the Canadian Nurses Association, the voice of 140,000 nurses. The editors of *Canadian Nurse* have offered to help mobilize our nursing community. In their current issue (June 2011) they are publishing an abbreviated form of this editorial and my correspondence with SSHRC. As a first step, we are asking CNA members to sign a letter of protest addressed to SSHRC. We ask you to do the same by consulting our Web site at [www.cjnr.mcgill.ca](http://www.cjnr.mcgill.ca) or the CNA Web site at [www.cna-nursing.ca](http://www.cna-nursing.ca). In the coming months we will be developing a more specific strategy and will be asking you to become involved in our lobbying efforts. Stay tuned!

*Editorial*

Our very viability, and the viability of all independent nursing and health journals, is at stake. Please join us. We need your support. Let the voices of nurses be heard so that we can continue in our work to give voice to yours.

**Laurie N. Gottlieb**  
**Editor-in-Chief**

**References**

- Gottlieb, L. N. (2005). Open access: A hot topic in the publishing world. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*, 37(2), 5–8.
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