<u>Happenings</u>

Canadian Academy of Health Sciences

Celeste Johnston

The Canadian Academy of Health Sciences (CAHS) is a unique group of multidisciplinary health scientists, all working together under one umbrella to provide assessments of health-related issues for the government and possibly industry. While such groups are an integral part of health-care policies in the United Kingdom and the United States, until 2005 there was no such entity in Canada.

The CAHS is one of three academies that together make up the Canadian Academy of Science, the other two being the Royal Society of Canada and the Engineering Society of Canada. The goals of the CAHS are to

- serve as a credible, expert, independent assessor of science and technology issues relevant to the health of Canadians
- support the development of timely, informed, strategic advice on urgent health issues
- support the development of sound and informed public policy related to these issues
- enhance understanding of science and technology issues affecting the public good by publicizing the results of its assessments and providing opportunities for public discussion of such matters
- provide a single authoritative and informed voice for Canadian health science communities
- monitor global health-related events to enhance Canada's state of readiness for the future
- represent Canadian health sciences internationally and liaise with like international academies to enhance understanding and collaboration on matters of mutual interest.

These goals are achieved by means of expert, arm's-length, credible assessments. Members of the CAHS receive no monetary remuneration for their work, and their academic independence ensures that CAHS assessments are free of conflict of interest.

Examples of assessments conducted in the United States that had significant input from nurses include *To Err Is Human: Building a Safer*

Health Care System and *Who Will Keep the Public Healthy? Educating Health Professionals for the 21st Century*.

Fellows of the CAHS are internationally recognized leaders with a strong research track record in health disciplines. Candidates are subjected to a nominating procedure and peer review before being admitted to the Academy. In 2005 the CAHS comprised approximately 200 fellows, 12 of whom were nurses; more nurses were to be inducted as fellows in September 2006. Dr. Dorothy Pringle sits on the CAHS Advisory Board and has taken an active leadership role in planning its future directions.

For more information, please consult http://www.cahs-acss.ca

———————————

Celeste Johnston, RN, PhD, is James McGill Professor, School of Nursing, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.