

Happenings

Centre for Innovation in Research and Knowledge to Action in Nursing

Judith A. Ritchie and Ann Lynch

A new nursing research centre emerging at the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, will bring an innovative approach to the bridging of the research–practice gap. Application of research results in nursing practice has been an issue since the early 1970s, and the MUHC’s nurse researchers have successfully completed a number of projects in this area. The new initiative will respond to the call for fresh approaches to research in order to increase the probability that clinical, administrative, and policy decisions will be informed by research evidence. In Canada, agencies for the funding of health research, such as the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (www.cihr.ca) and the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (www.chsrf.ca), are developing incentives and requirements for researchers to work with “decision-makers.” The intention is that, instead of a group of “creators” and “users” of knowledge, we will have research teams that co-create knowledge in context. This so-called Mode 2 knowledge production is a “novel way of producing knowledge” (Kitson & Bisby, 2008). We believe that evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) will lead to improved nursing care and more efficient utilization of research findings, as well as better integration of new knowledge, clinical practice, and patient preferences. The ultimate goal of such changes, and of the new Centre for Innovation in Research and Knowledge to Action in Nursing, is improved patient outcomes.

For over four decades the MUHC, one of the clinical agencies affiliated with McGill University, has maintained synergistic symbiotic relationships with the McGill School of Nursing. Nursing at McGill has a remarkably strong history of active involvement across the academic environments of the clinical agencies and the School itself. For more than three of those four decades, some of the MUHC’s hospital sites have included nurse researchers within their nursing departments. Currently, the MUHC’s own Nursing Department includes scientists and research consultants who are primarily hospital-based and scientists who are based

primarily in the School of Nursing but spend at least 1 day a week at the MUHC. This legacy has resulted in a thriving climate of inquiry. Active, successful research programs have developed in specific areas, and many members of the Nursing Department at all levels are raising questions about practice, conducting research, and seeking ways to extend evidence-informed practice. The Department is ripe for a move to the “next level.”

The MUHC’s impressive record of research and evidence-based practice will be used to establish the Centre through innovative research, knowledge translation strategies, and support of undergraduate and graduate education and continuing education. The main objective of the Centre will be to link theory, research, and clinical and administrative decision-making in order to improve the delivery and work environment of nursing care and, ultimately, to improve patient care. A distinct advantage of the Centre will be the linkage of researchers and practitioners/administrators in exchanges that will benefit both research and practice. The Centre will increase the interaction between knowledge creation and knowledge application and will move knowledge into action.

The Centre for Innovation in Research and Knowledge to Action in Nursing is being established with funding from the Newton Foundation, the Montreal General Hospital Foundation, the Research Institute of the MUHC, and the MUHC itself. Its mission is “to be recognized as a world leader in evidence-informed nursing by linking clinical and administrative practices with theoretical and research results to improve patient care and outcomes while creating a magnet environment that recruits, retains, and retrieves nurses. The Centre’s research clusters will obtain high-value research grants and contribute to enhancing nursing education at the undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education levels.” Some of its strategic objectives are to:

- implement EIDM research and training activities
- prepare and encourage researchers, clinicians, and administrators to become world leaders in research and knowledge translation
- improve the quality and efficiency of nursing care and improve patient outcomes through evidence-informed practice
- improve nurses’ work environment and become a magnet centre: attracting, retaining, and retrieving staff

Based on the population needs of the MUHC’s patients and families, and on areas of experience, expertise, and critical mass in nursing research within the MUHC, the leadership of the Nursing Department has identified six clusters in which the research programs will focus:

- comfort and healing
- women's health
- nursing services
- chronic illness management
- cancer care
- patient safety

Each of these clusters will develop interprofessional research teams, but the core of the clusters will include nurse scientists (100% research time), clinician scientists (50% research time), clinicians and/or administrators, patients and families, students, and knowledge brokers. The scientists will develop innovative knowledge translation strategies and incorporate "embedded KT" approaches into their research. The knowledge brokers will help to ensure, particularly in the early phases of development, the smooth flow of traffic between the "two solitudes" of practice and research. Each of the clusters will also have infrastructure support, in the form of coordinators, secretaries, research assistants, information managers, an editor, and access to core facilities within the Research Institute of the MUHC for design and analytic consultation.

In addition to the innovation of linking research activities and EIDM in nursing care and administrative practices, the Centre will expand current Nursing Research Consultant levels for clinicians and managers and will uniquely give a focus to training and education in EIDM. This focus makes a critical link with the Centre's aim of having the MUHC use EIDM as "a way of doing business." Central to this focus will be the knowledge brokers, who will provide direct support to interprofessional teams developing organizational capacity within the EIDM process.

The Centre's collaboration with other Montreal-based nursing initiatives is a key element in the setting of its goals. The Centre will be reinforcing its strong relationships with the McGill School of Nursing and the Sir Mortimer B. Davis Jewish General Hospital and, as it grows, will be forming liaisons with other research centres in the McGill network and intensifying the MUHC's current levels of collaboration with the Faculté des sciences infirmières of the Université de Montréal and the research centres of the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal. The MUHC and its Research Institute are collaborators in the Centre FERASI (regional training centre in nursing services administration research), the initiatives of GRIISIQ (Quebec Interuniversity Nursing Intervention Research Group), and the joint doctoral program in nursing offered by McGill and the Université de Montréal.

The principal objective of the Centre will be to improve the quality of patient and family care while optimizing the use of scarce resources. The application of findings from the research programs will enable

patients — initially those of the MUHC and the McGill hospital network and eventually all patients — to benefit in a more timely fashion from innovations in nursing care and administration. By collaborating with other nursing research and education initiatives in Montreal, the Centre will enable the Montreal nursing community to become a world leader in evidence-informed nursing. Because of its unique approach, linking research with clinical and administrative decisions and practices, the Centre will be in a class of its own.

References

Kitson, A., & Bisby, M. (2008). *Speeding up the spread: Putting KT research into practice and developing an integrated KT collaborative research agenda*. Background paper for the KT08 Forum. Retrieved May 7, 2009, from www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/kusp/pdfs/Kitson%20Module%204%20KT08.pdf.

Judith A. Ritchie, N, PhD, is Associate Director for Nursing Research, McGill University Health Centre, and Professor, School of Nursing, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Ann Lynch, N, MScA, is Associate Director General, Clinical Operations and Nursing Affairs, McGill University Health Centre.