

EDITORIAL

**Nursing Research and
Publishing Challenges as the Mantle
Passes to a New *CJNR* Editor:
Sean Clarke**

After 84 issues, 43 editorials, collaborating with 64 guest editors on 69 focus issues, publishing two anniversary issues, and having *CJNR* host the International Academy of Nursing Editors conference, it is time for me to pass the baton to a new editor. This is my last issue as Editor-in-Chief. I will be assuming the position of Editor Emeritus — whatever that role will become.

As of volume 45, Dr. Sean Clarke will be taking over the editorship. Sean has been involved with *CJNR* for 18 years. During the past eight he has served as Associate Editor. Sean has recently returned to his alma mater as the first occupant of the Susan E. French Chair at the Ingram School of Nursing of McGill University and is the newly appointed director of the McGill Nursing Collaborative for Education and Innovation in Patient- and Family-Centred Care. He is an established researcher, a prolific author, and editorial board member for several Canadian and US nursing publications. We have worked closely together over these many years and have penned a number of editorials together. Sean is extremely well qualified to carry the torch, to look at the Journal with fresh eyes while appreciating its history. He has the skills to lead *CJNR* into the brave new world of publishing.

When I was invited to assume the editorship 21 years ago, I could not have foreseen that I would be occupying this position for so long, nor could I have predicted the changes that have transpired in nursing, nursing research, and publishing. It was another time, another era — truly another world.

Other than belonging to the second wave of Canadian nurse scholars and researchers and being relatively well published for the time, I lacked the qualifications to warrant appointment as editor. Yet appointed I was — naïve on everyone's part, including my own. I learned on the job how to be an editor. I surrounded myself with able colleagues and had the support of the Canadian nursing academic community. It was a time

when all researchers in Canada knew one another, for ours was a small community of scholars. This was before Canada had doctoral programs in nursing and few PhD-prepared nurses. Master's-prepared nurses formed the backbone of our research community. Our main support was the Canadian Association of University Schools of Nursing. I made a yearly pilgrimage to the CAUSN annual meeting of Deans and Directors of University Schools of Nursing, which had about 37 members, for emotional and financial support. The executive director of CAUSN, the late Wendy McBride, and the deans and directors across the country never let me down.

When I was appointed to this position, I was faced with the reality that we had few manuscripts to publish, an erratic publishing schedule, and a list of just a handful of reviewers. Nevertheless, I believed that Canadian scholars needed a journal in which to publish their research and that nurse clinicians, educators, researchers, and students needed a journal with Canadian content to guide them. The challenge was how to ensure *CJNR*'s survival, then how to envisage it, and finally how to realize the vision.

Necessity is the mother of invention is one of those clichés that is a cliché because of its time-proven wisdom and truth. I'm not sure where the idea for focus issues came from, but I knew I couldn't do this alone. I needed the expertise of many to ensure the Journal's survival and growth. What better way to do so than to draw on the experience and expertise of my many friends and colleagues across Canada? The time was right, as nurse scholars were beginning to move from individual studies to programs of research. I respected my colleagues and knew that they were privy to what was happening in their respective fields and the major players in those fields; I believed that they were in a better position than I to know about ongoing, planned, and nearly completed research projects. I needed them to find authors, convince these authors that *CJNR* was a bona fide place to publish, and help me improve the quality of manuscripts through a more rigorous review process. At the same time, I wanted *CJNR* to continue to be a general journal. Eureka! Why not combine the two missions? This proved to be one of my best decisions. Inviting my colleagues to become guest editors served to transform *CJNR* from a McGill University journal into a national journal that was housed at McGill University. It has been an honour to work with so many talented, knowledgeable, and above all generous guest editors. Collaborating with them as well as with our authors and reviewers has been the most gratifying aspect of this position.

We are at a most exciting juncture in the development of both nursing and publishing. Advances in technology, a critical mass of seasoned nursing scholars, and the emergence of nursing as a mature and respected science are some of the forces transforming the health-care landscape. Yet there are many new challenges that editors will need to address in this evolving and changing landscape. Some of the challenges are specific to nursing while others are related to how best to disseminate information and research in this information, digital age. I will highlight just a few of these challenges.

Challenges for Developing Nursing Science

Challenge #1

Many have concluded that nurses can be a force in transforming health care by virtue of our sheer numbers and nursing's mandate in health and healing. They believe that nurses just need to be given the opportunity to practise to the full scope of their knowledge and skills (Institute of Medicine, 2010). Study after study has shown that when nurses provide *nursing* care, not just medical care, to groups requiring their skills and services, such as the elderly, those with chronic conditions, and those requiring palliative care, nurses can deliver safe, effective, comprehensive care that is also cost-effective for the system (Browne, 2012). Nursing research needs to continue to document the nature and effects of nursing practice, describe innovations to practice, identify specific groups who benefit most from professional nursing care, document a broad range of outcomes beyond mortality and morbidity, and identify the qualities and workplace conditions that are needed to ensure that nurses practise to their full capacity.

Challenge #2

There is a growing gap between different groups of nurses. This is disheartening and discouraging. Over 40 years ago, the late Dr. Helen Mussallem predicted the emergence of the technical nurse and the professional nurse. Her prophecy has come true. The profession of nursing has reaffirmed its mandate of promoting health, facilitating healing, and alleviating suffering. In keeping with this mandate, nursing research has focused on understanding these phenomena and how nurses fulfil their social contract through the nurse-patient relationship and preserving the public's trust. Yet far too many nurses subscribe to the idea of nursing as a set of technical activities and tasks rather than as a relational/moral/social profession practised on a technical foundation (Steele & Harmon, 1979). Anyone who has been a patient in hospital knows that a significant

number of nurses have discounted the centrality of the patient–nurse relationship. Spending time with patients and using basic communication skills have been devalued and in some cases rendered almost non-existent. Tasks have trumped the relationship and the need to take the experiences of patients and families into account. For many, nursing is a nine-to-five job rather than a vocation. Nursing education, service, and research need to bring these different camps in line and reclaim and recommit to nursing as a relational profession with a technical–task base. Nursing research needs to explore the reasons for the widening gap and address the factors responsible, including who is selected into nursing and how our educational and workplace environments contribute to professional identity and support or sabotage professional practice.

Challenge #3

Let us examine the nature of nursing itself. Nursing is the nexus of many activities and complex roles that require the integration of biological, psychosocial, and context-specific phenomena with underpinnings of holism and embodiment. Nursing research needs to pay more attention to explicating the biological basis and mechanisms of specific nursing phenomena. In this era of neurobiology and technological advances, we are beginning to understand the whole, integrated person. Our research questions and designs must reflect what we profess to be nursing values and nursing's focus.

Challenge #4

The trend towards interprofessional/interdisciplinary collaboration will continue to grow. Some nurses have been voicing a belief that interprofessional work means that professions have a convergent focus and speak the same language. This indicates that some nurses have adopted the medical model, assuming more medical tasks and devoting more of their studies to the medical issues of diagnosis and treatment. I would argue that this is the wrong path to be taking. Evolutionary theory has taught us that for a species to survive it must occupy its own niche (Gottlieb & Gottlieb, 1998). In a professional context, this means that nursing must have its own set of knowledge and skills and must play a role that no other profession can. Nursing needs to have its own framework of practice, rooted in the traditional values of holism, embodiment, uniqueness, and collaborative partnership, with a focus on strengths rather than on deficits and problems. We need more research to demonstrate nursing's effectiveness in empowering patients and families to take charge of their own healing and make their own health–care decisions.

In addition to the challenges of developing nursing science, there are those related to information dissemination.

Challenges for Information Dissemination

Challenge #1

The issue of impact factor (IF) will need to be reconsidered and revisited. Publishers, scholars, readers, and the academy have become more concerned about a journal's IF than about the impact that a particular article or study has on practice, education, management, and research. When one asks those preoccupied with IF what it is, most will state that a high IF is good but will have little understanding of what it is and how it is derived. IF reflects the journal, not the impact of a specific article. Few understand what is involved in calculating a journal's IF (Gottlieb & Clarke, 2005). Many so-called IF articles are actually low impact (as reflected in the number of citations) but because they are published in high-impact journals readers assume they are significant. The focus should be the quality of the article and its impact in directing clinical decisions and inspiring creative, person-focused practice, rather than its impact on tenure committees. *CJNR* is too small to be awarded an IF. Yet our impact is high if measured according to the number of articles that are downloaded. Among more than 16,200 journals, *CJNR* consistently ranks high for full downloads on ingentaconnect.com. For example, in February 2012 *CJNR* ranked 39th, with 2,814 downloads, and in March 2012 it ranked 36th, with 3,031. In September 2012 it ranked 26th, with 3,034 downloads, and in October 2012 it ranked 23rd, with 3,576! And so forth. The idea of increasing impact is a good one, but a question that needs to be addressed is how best to measure impact.

Challenge #2

A major trend in this new information age is the democratization of information. Democratization plays out in different debates and is reflected in discussions on open access and open content, the role of social media in academic publishing, online publications, self-publications, and the like. Some of the discussions centre on having free access to all scholarly journals at little or no cost, based on the principle of open access. The bottom line is that diffusion of information is a costly venture, with many hidden costs, such as those incurred in creating more sophisticated platforms, in editing, and so on. Although different models have been tried — with varying degrees of success — no one standard model has yet emerged.

Along with open access come open content, online publishing, and self-publishing. The underlying issue in these debates is how to control the quality and veracity of what is published. We are living in an era of clever schemes for plagiarism, duplicate publication, salami publication, and the like. Sophisticated computer programs are being used to detect

plagiarism and duplicate publication. In terms of quality, different models have been used to judge the quality and accuracy of an article, almost all employing the widely accepted peer-review process. Although other models have been tried, none has proved superior to the scrutiny of one's peers. Nonetheless, the peer-review approach will be challenged, new models tried, or articles published without the benefit of review. Editors will need to become hypervigilant and even more sceptical if they are to fulfil their role as gatekeepers of knowledge and ensure the integrity of information that is published on their watch. As part of their role, editors will require a more sophisticated arsenal and will need reviewers who are knowledgeable and up-to-date, to ensure the veracity and validity of what they are publishing. Only then will their readership be well served and the public safeguarded from reports that have been falsified or data that have been distorted.

Challenge #3

Since Johannes Gutenberg introduced the printing press to the Western world, scientific information has been communicated in one medium — the written word. Now, however, visuals, audiorecordings, and media that make use of our other senses to communicate information are being tried, because each communicates different slices of information about the same phenomenon. In a similar vein, information dissemination will continue to move from the unidirectional relationship of author to reader to increasing interactivity and all that it entails. Blogs and online commentaries are the precursors of this trend.

Moreover, traditionally articles have reported on the outcomes of research. The article of the future will be concerned as well with how the results were derived — in other words, the research process *per se*.

As we move from print to electronic forms of communication, from personal to social media, from one-medium (auto-media) to multimedia formats, from passive, non-connected interactions (e.g., writer and reader) to interactive dialogue and discourse, journals will need to become relevant, responsive, and adaptive. Only those journals that are able to do so will survive. Whereas in the past, content changed while the format remained constant, the brave new world of publishing will require authors, publishers, and readers to adapt to new content presented in many different formats.

Parting words: *CJNR* has been able to evolve because we have anticipated future trends in nursing and health care and in the world of publishing, and planned accordingly. Its publication has required and will continue to require vision, knowledge, commitment, creativity, courage, versatility, adaptability, a modicum of chutzpah, and above all imagination and integrity.

We are in a time of transition — moving from one form of communication to another that is not yet fully developed. Yet we should never forget that human beings are wired to think and not be hoodwinked into believing that technology can ever replace human imagination, vision, and thought. In this brave new world where publishing is driven by technology, we would do well to remember the wisdom of Albert Einstein, who is reported to have cautioned: “Computers are incredibly fast, accurate, and stupid. Humans are incredibly slow, inaccurate, and brilliant. Together they are powerful beyond imagination.” Thus, *machines should work; people should think*.

These are exciting times filled with opportunities and endless possibilities. *CJNR* will continue to develop while respecting its mission to disseminate high-quality nursing research with a Canadian orientation. I for one can hardly wait to see what lies ahead. Bonne chance, Sean!

Laurie N. Gottlieb
Editor-in-Chief

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