

## Editorials

# New challenges and innovations in community health nursing

Some readers will recall a special issue of the journal (4:2) devoted to papers presented at an international symposium hosted by the charity: International Conferences on Community Health Nursing Research (ICCHNR) of which the two editors are the co-convenors (Kendall and Bryar, 2003). In this issue we are pleased to be able to publish the keynote papers and some of the research symposium papers from the most recent conference hosted by ICCHNR in partnership with the Japan Academy of Community Health Nursing (JACHN) held in Tokyo in autumn 2005. In addition in this issue we have a paper inspired by the first President of ICCHNR (Newall *et al.*, 2006) and a paper from Malawi (Norr *et al.*, 2006) demonstrating the lessons that can be learnt through international exchange in community nursing.

The purpose of ICCHNR is to improve the quality of community health nursing, advance and share knowledge of practice through research, increase personal commitment by community nurses to evidence-based practice, encourage the appropriate use of research and promote awareness of the contribution of community nurses to public health policies and alliances. In addition ICCHNR is committed to supporting and learning from nurses in less developed countries. The aims of the charity are promoted through symposia and conferences held in different parts of the world.

The Tokyo conference was attended by 583 representatives from 21 countries, covering South-East Asia, the Americas, Europe, Africa and Australasia: all the WHO regions. Over 250 abstracts were submitted to the conference indicating the interest in community nursing research.

Globally, community health nurses have few opportunities to engage in critical debate about the science and application of knowledge that is so essential to community and primary care nurses developing their practice to meet health care need

effectively. It is now more than 25 years since the Declaration of Alma Ata (World Health Organization, 1978) and yet in health terms, the need for sound evidence to underpin prevention and management of health care needs in the community is greater than ever.

As Geoff Meads (2006) discusses in the Guest Editorial new solutions to the organization of primary health care are being developed and tested in different parts of the world. These different models, ‘complex stakeholder enterprises’ (Meads, 2006), demonstrate the beliefs and values within different parts of the international community but all indicate the importance of the social and organizational context to the delivery of primary health care. This is a theme explored in the paper by Jeanne Besner (2006), one of the keynote speakers at the conference, who provides a historical review of primary health care policy. She discusses the leadership potential of nurses, reminding us of the role that Dr Mahler (1985) urged on primary care nurses, but emphasizing the importance of organizational context to enable nurses to make full use of their skills in contributing to high quality primary health care. The issue of quality of primary health care is taken up by Karen Luker (2006), in the second keynote paper of the conference, who focuses on the quality of home care nursing and the contribution of nursing research to understanding and raising standards of care. In her paper Luker identifies the weakness of the research base in community nursing and the difficulty of applying research findings from hospital-based studies to the primary health care setting, an issue for all researchers in primary health care. She urges the establishment of programmes of research to develop the evidence base for community-based care.

The next three papers were presented as part of the research symposium held at the conference. Jean McIntosh (2006) addresses the starting point of any

health care delivery: assessment. Reflecting the Guest Editorial, McIntosh (2006) emphasizes the important impact that the social and political context of a country has on the assessment process, for example, in countries with insurance-based health care systems the assessment process may be different to countries where eligibility issues are not a concern. Drawing on her own teams extensive research in the area of patient/client assessment McIntosh elegantly illustrates the value of community nursing research to practice. Sheila Shaibu (2006), from a completely different part of the world, is also concerned with the application of research to practice and discusses the challenges faced by community nurses in a developing country to access evidence and use evidence in practice. In her paper she provides a clear demonstration of international collaboration, a positive aspect of globalization. Katsuko Kanagawa and colleagues *et al.* (2006) in their paper move the focus from the individual to promotion of healthy communities. In a description of their work in a community in Japan they demonstrate the important role of nurses working in partnership with communities. This brings us back to the need to consider not only health services but also other aspects of people's lives and the impact of different types of interventions on health. The role of communities is taken up in the paper from Norr *et al.* (2006), which illustrates further strategies focused on prevention for working in partnership with communities in Malawi where HIV/AIDS is prevalent.

This special issue of *Primary Health Care Research and Development* ends with a 'special' paper, which we are privileged to be able to publish (Newall *et al.*, 2006). The paper presents and discusses a new concept that of 'cumulative trivia', first identified by Dr Lisbeth Hockey, past President of ICCHNR and a pioneer of research in community nursing in the UK and internationally. The paper is written posthumously by a group of Dr Hockey's colleagues and is part of the research legacy that Lisbeth has left. We hope this publication will stimulate debate and research to test the proposed concept.

ICCHNR is a small but active organization and we hope that the papers included here will promote further interest in the organization. ICCHNR is planning to hold a research symposium in Spain in 2007 and a conference in Adelaide, Australia in

2009 in partnership with public health and community organizations in these countries. More information about the activities of ICCHNR and more information on the Tokyo conference can be found on the web site: [www.icchnr.org](http://www.icchnr.org).

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