

# **The Senior Years**

## **An Editorial by**

### **Dorothy M. Wylie, Editor**

1999 is designated by the United Nations as The International Year of Older Persons and this issue is dedicated to that theme. Health problems of the elderly and the provision of appropriate and adequate care are real concerns for the nursing profession to face now and in the future. As the elder population increases due to greater longevity and improved medical technology these concerns will escalate. Wells and colleagues describe a model for discharge planning for the acutely ill elderly patient to improve the process and provide a more satisfactory outcome. Skelly and Boblin-Cummings discuss the issue of incontinence and the impact on the life of the senior. Recognition of this sometimes hidden or unspoken problem presents a challenge to nurses to provide some treatment options.

Wilden, McMullen and Goudy examine nurses perspective of patient acuity on Geriatric Assessment Units. Caring for the elderly has the connotation of "heavy care" and the authors explore some insights into this impression. Nursing care for the elderly is not easy and is further complicated by the emotional reaction to hospitalization of both the patient and the extended family.

As a senior, I too had the occasion to experience hospitalization recently. The experience had high and low moments. Having an "attitude" seems to be a favorite saying these days, and it could be applied to nurses. Some still have caring attitudes despite the hardships, while others could be said to just have "an attitude". When one is unable to do for themselves, it is certainly more satisfying and therapeutic to have the former type.

However, the latter type seems prevalent, to the point sometimes where you feel more like "victim" than "patient". Constant reiteration of overwork and shortages, when a request is made, is not helpful to patients or staff. I won't belabor the point, but suggest "nurses need to see themselves as others see them" before their credibility and public sympathy fades.

Zilm and Warbinek feature the leadership profile of Scharley Phoebe (Wright) Brown who was a prominent figure in establishing registration for nurses in the province of British Columbia. The indomitable nature of these pioneer women in nursing is extraordinary and calls for recognition and celebration. The Perspective section features a speech given by Chris Power at the annual ACEN meeting which highlights the lack of support for nursing research as institutional resources are stretched. Lastly, Simpson reviews the updated version of Nursing Management in Canada by Hibberd and Smith, a useful edition for Canadian nurses.

The Journal congratulates Judith Shamian, Toronto on her appointment as Executive Director, Nursing Policy at Health Canada, Ottawa. She assumed the post in August and we wish her well in future undertakings of importance to nurses and the profession.

## **ACEN President's Report**

As the President of the Academy of Canadian Executive Nurses (ACEN) for 1999/2000, I am pleased to provide the readers of the Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership with an update of ACEN...its purpose, activities and membership.

Those of us who are members of ACEN, have found ACEN to be a critical professional link for addressing key nursing issues, sharing strategies related to the advancement of nursing

practice, education and research within academic health care centres, disseminating information and expertise amongst our colleagues and other related groups, keeping ourselves informed of initiatives across Canada, and in developing a common direction where necessary in order to facilitate national coordination of nursing initiatives. Supporting and promoting The Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership has been an important component of our responsibilities as well. We are formally recognized by many nursing organizations such as the CNA and provide input and representation as necessary.

The executive of ACEN holds tele-conference meetings approximately 3 times per year. Our annual meeting is held every April, in conjunction with ACTH (Association of Canadian Teaching Hospitals). We have our own ACEN meeting during that time and in addition schedule collaborative sessions with our colleagues. Having that annual opportunity to interact with our CEO colleagues, VP's of Medicine, Deans of the Faculties of Medicine, and other key groups who also meet at that time, has proven to be an important venue to enhance dialogue and emphasize the importance of some of the nursing issues we are facing.

To be a member of ACEN, you must be an RN within a leadership position (within an ACTH eligible organization..i.e. Canadian university teaching facility and/or facility associated with university schools of nursing), accountable for strategic, operational and educational outcomes; holding senior responsibility for nursing practice. Within current membership we designate one lead member for each province. The current provincial representatives are: Chris Power (Nova Scotia), Barbara McGill (New Brunswick), Joan Walsh (PEI), Louise Jones ( Newfoundland), Patricia O'Connor (Quebec), Patricia Petryshen (Ontario), Carol Ringer (Manitoba), Denise Hardenne (Saskatchewan), Nora Kirkham (Alberta), Marla

Fryers (British Columbia). If there are issues you wish to bring to the attention of ACEN, please contact your provincial rep.

We also have an associate membership category. Associate membership is available to past members who are no longer employed in the healthcare system and want to maintain their connection with ACEN. The fee is 50% of regular annual membership dues and the associate members will receive the CJNL and ACEN Newsletter, and may attend the Annual Meeting in a non-voting capacity. We warmly welcome those of you who would be eligible as either full members, or as associate members.

We would sincerely welcome new members. If you believe you may be eligible to become a member of ACEN, or if you want further information about our organization, please contact me by phone or email at **wnicklin@civich.ottawa.on.ca**, 613-761-4475, or contact your provincial representative. We will be sure to send you the appropriate information.

We are in the process of developing the terms of reference for an ACEN sponsored nursing bursary. As soon as the development process is finalized, we will insure that information as to how to apply for the bursary is published.

On your behalf, I extend our sincerest thanks to Dorothy Wylie, Editor of the CJNL, for her commitment and dedication to ensuring that a Canadian journal for nursing leaders, a journal with integrity, has been maintained. We recently changed the name and format of the Canadian Journal of Nursing Administration, to the Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership. Dorothy Wylie has continued to play a key role in this progress and ensuring relevance and integrity through this transition. Thank you Dorothy!

*Wendy Nicklin, ACEN President*