

Leading and Learning in Post-COVID Healthcare Systems

As summer slowly gives way to autumn, I find myself reflecting on the activities of the summer. One memory that stands out is attendance at the 29th International Congress of Nurses held in Montreal in July 2023. Cohosted by the International Council of Nurses and the Canadian Nurses Association, it was an amazing opportunity to meet and learn with nurses from all over the world. It was wonderful to be able to get together in person and feel the palpable energy created by more than 6,000 delegates from 123 countries gathered together for a common purpose. Check out the videos at the following link to see what I mean: <https://icncongress2023.org/>.

I came away with a greater sense of the collective impact of nursing leadership on the health and well-being of people living in diverse contexts around the world, including regions that are war-torn and experiencing extreme poverty. The courage and commitment shown by nurses in very challenging contexts was incredibly moving and motivating. I remember thinking, if they can do what they do, I can surely find a way to do what I am charged to do.

It was wonderful to be able to come and go, talking with people freely in large and small rooms without fear. COVID-19 was acknowledged but did not dominate the milieu or the program. There were COVID-related presentations but also on many other topics. There was a sense, not of things being back to normal, but that we have adjusted to a normal that includes an acceptance of the certainty of change and our ability as nurses to adapt.

In This Issue

This issue reflects the reality that COVID-19 is not, and may not ever be, gone but we have learned how to live with it. Similarly, as we reclaim our patterns of work, school and play, there is a realization that what was familiar has changed. We have accepted that, and understand that change will be a constant companion going forward. We have learned different ways of working, teaching, learning and playing. The articles in this issue reflect that metamorphosis and give voice to what nursing and nurses have learned with, from and about COVID-19 while moving forward.

Donner and Wheeler (2023) start this issue with an article that provides a leadership perspective developed from nurses' stories during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. They outline four themes that have implications for nurses in leadership roles and conclude with six powerful statements for nurse leaders. They highlight the expert coaching and mentoring skills leaders will need to navigate the path of change that is the way forward – chief among them, the ability to listen to understand.

This is followed by a timely leadership commentary from Bélanger-Hardy et al. (2023), who draw on their recently completed rapid review to identify and describe strategies for successful implementation of mentorship programs in hospital settings. Their commentary describes the evidence underpinning each strategy and argues for a scaling up of mentorship programs tailored to nurses at different career stages.

Next in this issue are three research articles. First, Cave et al. (2023) present the results of their scoping review mapping the organizational supports for nurse managers whose role, though critically important and expanding, is often invisible. Overall, their findings indicate that organizational supports for nurse managers are lacking, and this contributes to work-related pressures and impacts role functioning. Importantly, their review also explores existing supports that could be implemented, scaled up and evaluated.

Bhimani et al. (2023) describe the results of the evaluation of a leadership program that was implemented for managers in public health to develop capabilities in supporting resiliency and psychological safety among the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic. They describe the development and qualitative evaluation of a multi-component Public Health Leadership Program to understand what managers found the most helpful about the program for improving their leadership practice and confidence. Their findings indicate that participants value the development of listening and mindful communication skills and, in the words of a participant in the evaluation, “leading with vulnerability and intention” (Bhimani et al. 2023: 50).

The third research paper, authored by Moody et al. (2023), outlines the results of an environmental scan of interventions to improve the nursing care of people with dementia in Canadian hospitals. They identify three categories of interventions including those that address responsive behaviours, those that help nurses individualize care and those that improve nurses' knowledge, attitude and skills. The authors use an implementation science framework to assess the implementation

of these interventions and comment on the implications of their review for nurses and their employers in the wake of the healthcare system challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To close this issue, Stake-Doucet (2023) reviews a book entitled, *Taking Care: The Story of Nursing and Its Power to Change Our World*, written by Sarah DiGregorio. This review describes how DiGregorio's book surfaces the tension between the professionalism and social justice mandates of nursing through stories of nurse leaders. It takes a "deep dive into the complexities of nursing leadership, about the push and pull between 'proper' professional leadership, and revolutionary, disruptive leadership" (Stake-Doucet 2023: 73).

For me, the book review and the other articles in this issue provide a powerful reminder that we are all part of a global nursing community that encompasses the present, the past and the future. Together we are leading to learn and learning to lead in post-COVID healthcare systems.

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