

Editorial

20th Anniversary of the Family Nursing Unit

In June 2002, 20 years of exciting developments within the Family Nursing Unit (FNU) were acknowledged and celebrated! The FNU has been a place of unique learning opportunities for graduate students within the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada and has received international recognition for outstanding clinical scholarship in family nursing (Wright, Watson, & Bell, 1990; Wright, Watson, & Duhamel, 1985).

The story of the FNU began in 1980 when Lorraine M. Wright, R.N., Ph.D., was recruited to the Faculty of Nursing from the Faculty of Medicine at a time when the master of nursing program at the University of Calgary was just being developed with a focus on advanced practice in nursing. Upon her arrival in the Faculty of Nursing, Dr. Wright had a vision for creating a unique faculty practice unit where students could observe expert clinical practice of faculty and offer nursing practice to families experiencing illness while receiving live supervision from faculty with participation from a clinical team who observed the practice from behind a one-way mirror. In addition to live supervision and the involvement of a clinical team, the learning model Dr. Wright envisioned was one in which each therapeutic conversation between the nurse and the family would be videotaped, thus bringing the nursing practice with families from behind closed doors and available for examination, discussion, and reflection. The first therapeutic conversation with a family was conducted on January 23, 1982 by Glenda Labelle, with Dr. Wright providing live supervision and working with a clinical team of graduate students who were Glenda's classmates. From the beginning, the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Calgary has generously and consistently provided well-designed space and state-of-the-art technology to help the dream for this unique learning facility to be realized.

In addition to the educational mission, the FNU also became a place where advanced practice with families was observed, described, refined, and evaluated within a program of research. Under Dr. Wright's visionary and committed leadership during the past 20 years, the Family Nursing Unit has offered over 100 masters and doctoral nursing students an opportunity to learn the knowledge and skills of family systems nursing and offered assistance to over 350 families suffering with serious illnesses. Numerous books, articles, presentations at national and international meetings, and videotapes developed by Dr. Wright, faculty colleagues (Drs. Wendy Watson, Janice Bell, Nancy Moules), and graduate students have originated out of the nursing practice conducted at the FNU and contributed to a growing body of knowledge about nursing of families (for more information, see FNU Web site: www.ucalgary.ca/NU/fnu/).

During the 20th anniversary celebration of the FNU a special tribute was paid to Dr. Lorraine Wright to mark her retirement from the Faculty of Nursing, University of Calgary and acknowledge her outstanding efforts to create and disseminate knowledge about nursing practices with families experiencing illness. Dr. Wright's clinical scholarship has changed the face of family nursing with important contributions to theory, practice, and research. Her work has been valued by an international community of nurses and by a variety of health professionals who encounter families in their clinical practice.

Her extraordinary efforts to create and disseminate knowledge within family nursing has been evidenced in numerous ways. Dr. Wright codeveloped the Calgary family assessment and intervention models described in a best-selling nursing textbook for generalist nursing practice with families, which is in a third revised edition and has been translated into five languages (Wright & Leahey, 2000). She also coauthored a textbook that describes an advanced practice approach named the illness beliefs model, developed from her program of research that has examined clinical practice with families (Wright, Watson, & Bell, 1996). Additionally, Dr. Wright convened the first International Family Nursing Conference in Calgary in 1988 and has provided leadership in several other international professional associations. Every year for the past 10 years she and her colleagues have offered a 1-week intensive workshop at the University of Calgary that focuses on nursing practice with families and has been attended by nurses from around the world. Dr. Wright has coedited four books, authored more than 60 articles and book chapters, and has given over 300 presentations at national and international nursing, family health, and family therapy conferences.

The work of Dr. Lorraine Wright and her leadership of the FNU at the University of Calgary has had a significant impact on nursing knowledge about caring practices with families. An endowed fund, the Lorraine M. Wright Family Nursing Scholarship, has been established at the University of Calgary in her honor. She will continue her scholarly work and consultation in family nursing as a professor emeritus at the University of Calgary.

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