

CONFERENCE REPORT

14th National Nurse Education Conference 2012: keeping the flame alight

Perth, Western Australia: 11-13 April 2012
MC Matlakala,
Department of Health Studies,
University of South Africa

The 14th National Nurse Education Conference 2012 was held in Perth, Western Australia (WA) from 11-13 April 2012. The conference was hosted by the Australian Nurse Teachers Society (ANTS), Western Australia branch. The conference theme was 'Keeping the flame alight'.

The vision of ANTS is to work together for the future of nursing education. The aim of the conference was to bring to light the changing demands facing nursing education and challenges of the future. The three day event was an opportunity to reconnect with fellow nurse educators in clinical practice and education arenas, from across Australia and meet new ones from other countries. The objective was to promote excellence, scholarship and leadership in nursing practice and education and also to promote nursing leaders, who are active in research, education and practice. The conference delegates were from several universities and hospitals in Australia and other countries.

The conference delegates were welcomed to Australia by Sealin Garlett, who addressed the conference delegates in the aboriginal cultural style. The conference opening included a presentation by the keynote speaker, Selma Allieux, whose address on 'A tapestry for nursing education' resonated with the conference theme and highlighted the essentials for expanding and translating nursing education and practice. Two other welcome speeches covered teaching and learning, computing, health and science. Both presentations highlighted important and interesting issues in nursing and nursing education as an introduction to the conference theme.

The three day programme focused on innovations in nursing education in both clinical and academic arenas. The conference was divided into plenary sessions and concurrent sessions for the three days. In the plenary sessions the invited speakers addressed the following topics on different days: international opportunities for nursing education and challenges in nursing education; cross cultural perspectives on teaching and learning;

the challenges of legal therapeutic boundaries in nursing education; and the future of nursing education.

The themes for the conference presentations in the concurrent sessions were Ideology to Reality, the Art of Nursing and Lifelong Learning. Papers in the concurrent sessions were presented by speakers from universities and hospitals from Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Fiji and other countries. The first plenary session attended by the author included the presentation on Lifelong Learning and reflective practice. Several presentations on Lifelong learning were from academic research Masters and Doctoral studies. An interesting topic was 'A double degree in nursing: why did you do it'? Several research methodologies were presented, together with the challenges encountered when using the methodologies, and the relevance of such methodologies. It was interesting to learn the importance, use and different methods of triangulation in research. During the interactive discussions on lifelong learning the needs to conduct and publish research and to use research findings (translated into action research) were emphasised. Another topic highlighted scholarships and the challenges encountered in using them to promote lifelong learning.

With regard to the theme of the Art of Nursing, one of the most interesting presentations was titled 'Nursing language: what is nursing language'. The topic highlighted the importance of the acquisition and use of nursing language during training. It was indicated that nursing language should be the nurses' own unique health care language. Students should be socialised in the workplace into using culture-related language. The presenter acknowledged that there is a narrow theory practice gap related to work place transition which leads to communication errors due to language differences.

In another presentation of Generation Y New Zealand registered nurses, information was provided about new nurses' passion for nursing, focusing on the realities of practice in view of retaining young nurses in the nursing profession. Factors influencing Generation Y nurses to stay or leave nursing were discussed, some of which included remuneration, concerns about the shortages of nurses, the demands for nursing services, efforts directed at retention of nurses, and using nursing as a stepping stone to access other professions. The theme on Ideology to Reality included presentations such as community engagement in nursing education and teaching, determining the requirements of international nursing education programmes and innovation as ideology with its constraints in reality. The use of reflective journals was emphasised in providing clinical support for undergraduate nursing students.

Finally the conference presentations included seven keynote addresses and 75 oral presentations divided into plenary and parallel sessions, one panel session on the future of nursing education, which was conducted at the end of the conference and 10 poster presentations which continued for the three days. The conference closing address

was given by Sandra Campbell-Crofts, ANTS, president who also bid the conference delegates farewell.

The conference included social sessions allowing the delegates to meet and network. The author was better equipped with exposure to current issues in nursing education and innovative research initiatives related to nursing education and practice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to thank the Scholars Development Programme (SDP): Mentorship Programme 2010-2011, College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa for sponsoring the conference attendance.

Further information on the conference can be obtained from www.ants.org.au.