

REPORT: 2014 STATE OF THE SCIENCE CONGRESS ON NURSING RESEARCH: 18–20 SEPTEMBER 2014, WASHINGTON, DC

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The Council for the Advancement of Nursing Science (CANS) hosted the conference in Washington DC, from 18–20 September 2014. The conference theme was: ‘optimising health by addressing complexity’. The mission of CANS is ‘promoting better health through nursing science’.

The objectives of the conference were to: identify innovative strategies to optimise health by addressing complexities in individuals, populations and health systems; apply discoveries for diverse populations across their lifespan; and engage in dialogue about the implications of emerging science and future directions for the discipline of nursing.

The target audience of the conference comprised nurse scientists, faculty members, pre and postdoctoral students as well as under and postgraduate nursing students. Approximately 1 000 people attended this conference.

Every morning’s session started off with keynote and plenary sessions, followed by numerous concurrent and poster sessions. The keynote sessions addressed complexity in health care, innovations to cope with complex health-care issues, advances made by the Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) initiative of the National Institutes of Health (of America), and recommendations for preparing nurse scientists.

Out of all the abstracts submitted to the conference organisers, nine ‘presentations of distinction’ were selected, based on having received the highest ratings from the abstract reviewers. These nine presentations addressed various health-related issues, namely: HIV risk reduction strategies for urban adolescent girls; designing quality of life instruments for persons suffering from intellectual disabilities; challenges of using tele-health to enhance bone health in deployed soldiers; exploring patient-centred issues in surgical oncology; healthy babies through infant-centred feeding; testing diathesis stress theory; penile cancer; visualisation methods for organising, analysing and integrating

diverse data sets; and the influence of a higher complex carbohydrate diet on maternal metabolic outcomes in gestational diabetes and on infant adiposity.

Numerous podium (concurrent paper) and poster sessions were ongoing throughout the day. Advanced planning was essential to make the best use of the available opportunities addressing symptoms of diseases, health-related issues throughout the lifespan, nursing practice issues, military and veterans' health, mental health, cultural disparities, women's and children's health, treatment adherence, research and publication issues.

Important issues that were raised in relation to nursing and health-related research included: measuring treatment adherence requires standardised scales to produce meaningful results; researchers should ensure that their respondents/participants provide truly informed consent not only to participate in any study, but also to determine their treatment decisions; community-based projects must be sustainable to be ethical and the community members must feel valued, implying that the researchers need to listen to the community members' needs; when community-based research results are published, the communities concerned should also be informed about these results in meaningful ways acceptable to the relevant communities; intervention research outcomes should include valid outcomes from the patients' perspectives; health-care workers and researchers should avoid using 'disempowering' communication styles with community members; and health-related research should proceed beyond being merely descriptive studies by implementing and evaluating research-based recommendations and by influencing health-care policies appropriately.

Editors from a number of different nursing and health-related journals presented a session on publishing research articles. All agreed that plagiarism (including ego-plagiarism) posed challenges to editors and journals. Although it was agreed that plagiarism detection programs, such as 'Turnitin' and 'CrossCheck' are not necessarily foolproof, they do provide tools to editors for identifying instances of plagiarism. While some delegates considered the publication of findings from pilot studies to be worthwhile, others disagreed and maintained that only findings from full, completed studies should be published.

It was indeed a most worthwhile conference to attend where every paper and poster was of a very high academic standard. Nurse researchers, academics and postgraduate students could definitely benefit from attending similar conferences in future and from networking with global leading nurse researchers. I did not meet any conference delegate from South Africa or from Africa. Future conferences are planned for October 2015 and September 2016 in Washington, DC. Details are available from:

<http://www.nursingscience.org/2014-state-of-the-science-congress>.

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