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## Nursing's Future

The CDNM is the peak organisation that represents the Deans, Leaders and Heads of Higher Education courses for Nursing and Midwifery throughout Australia and New Zealand. The Council is the voice of higher education for nurses and midwives, and provides leadership on health policy, education standards and research as applied to nurses and midwives.

### Background

The Council of Deans wishes to make a statement about the future of nursing. It is being made in the context of the profession in health care practice being buffeted by the pressures of managing an ever pressurised health system, with increasing cost, to promote the value of nursing.

In considering the future of Nursing<sup>1</sup> the following issues are relevant:

- The evolution of the digital world will shape the future more than one can really appreciate. Digital evolution will drive science and technology.
- The quest for effectiveness and efficiency will depend upon a re-ordering of the health team member's roles and accountabilities. Multi-professional collaborations must be devised to cope with the new environment. This will be measured by greater use of outcome data and the patient's ability to manage self-care.
- It is essential that the ideal education of nurses prepares nurses to undertake the most effective roles they can take; with full responsibility and accountability for the effectiveness of these roles. If nurses wish to play an active role in the shaping of health care which reflects the values society places on health, then nurses must accept this responsibility. To achieve this, then nurses must explore and enquire further into society's views about the type of health care it wants and needs. This is so nurses can influence the policy decisions that will be made by health care providers, employers, professional bodies, state and commonwealth government entities; all of which will shape and determine the ultimate expression of health care within the Commonwealth of Australia in the 21st century; and therefore of nursing.

1. Nursing refers especially to the Registered Nurse (RN)\*, but is cognisant of the RN being the leader of a nursing team that includes enrolled nurses and varying kinds of nursing assistants.

\*Registered with the Nurses and Midwives Board of Australia, or the Nursing Council of New Zealand.

## Summary

- Nursing's future is inextricably bound to that of society; both its future and therefore that of health care will drive the future of Nursing.
- Nursing will achieve this by leading the movement to person-centred care set within a self-care, shared care, and restorative care context.
- Nursing will expand its scope of practice to provide care that is trusted by the general population, harnessing the relationship with the patient and family through their health journey.
- Nursing will harness the transformational forces, in terms of health care reform, in order to achieve its goal of person-centred care.

## Position

Person-centred care will be reflected in how the health system and therefore Nursing responds to an ageing population, to different gender-based diagnostics and care plans, as well as incorporating cultural and spiritual aspects of care. Nurses' role with regard to those needing care, or a dignified death, when one suffers from a disease or illness one can neither prevent nor cure also needs to be central.

The provision of health care which becomes person-centred and holistic prevents the reductionist medicalisation of health and ill-health and embraces, social and economic factors as well. Health care provision and therefore nursing provision should expand to include more comprehensive programs in prevention and chronic care; with the long-term implications of this change being momentous.

This will be set within an expanding definition of health care. The genetic revolution, which is now beginning to gain ground, promises some amazing future treatment scenarios. Genetic manipulation will provide pre-emptive strikes to reduce the risk poor health of genetically predisposed individuals. This revolution also supports a broader understanding of health care and an insistence that it include prevention of disease and promotion of healthy lifestyles.

No one health profession can do it all, organised care delivery systems of one type or another will need to incorporate, creatively, all health professionals; including new types of health workers. All will be involved in a coordinated effort on behalf of the patient in the provision of health care. Society will decide what value it will place on health (or not), to improve resources for health (or not), to clarify societal beliefs with regard to health, health gain, health improvement or its scope of activity. Nursing must seek to compliment the various elements of health care provision and participate in offering the services that society

will value. Nursing will need to lead the negotiation of its position in this changing dynamic from a position of strength as a major solution of current health system challenges.

In considering nursing's future, the following position is taken:

In order to realise this potential more fully, Nursing needs to change its position to one where holistic care will be realised and led by Nurses with nurses being integral to the health care system providing front line care and providing activity to stimulate healthy communities, through:

- Promoting the Nurse as the possessor of scientific and technical knowledge which enables them to be capable practitioners;
- Nurses applying this knowledge through a skill set rooted in inter-personal communication and relationship focused care provision;
- Compassion and empathy guiding the Nurse, so that understanding of suffering is realised, death is acknowledged and prepared for whilst quality of life is enhanced; and
- Enhancing of quality of life through assisting and enabling adaptation by the individual with the nurse being a teacher of health behaviours and knowledge.

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