



NURSING Dimensions

End-of-Life Care: Speaking a Straightforward Language

"Death is 100 percent," says Karin T. Kirchhoff, PhD, RN, FAAN, Rodefer Chair and professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Nursing. "As consumers of health care, we don't all get cancer; we don't all get heart disease, but we all die. As nurses, we need to acquire the skills to deal with death personally and to adequately prepare patients and their families at the end of life."

Kirchhoff is co-director of the Center for Patient-Centered Interventions (CPCI), a National Institute of Nursing Research-funded initiative at the School of Nursing. She is also one of the nation's pre-eminent nurse researchers in end-of-life care. Kirchhoff's research focuses on developing care models that prepare both patients and their families for death through early decision making and advance care planning.

The research is clear, Kirchhoff notes, that physicians usually overestimate the answer to the patient's question, "How long will I live?" and, thus, the patient is not prepared for death. "At the end of life, there's work to be done—asking forgiveness, getting affairs in order, making preferences of care known to family members, and choosing treatment options."

Kirchhoff is currently preparing patients with end-stage illness and their families for the end of life in the outpatient setting. With the participation of health care providers in the La Crosse, Madison, and Milwaukee areas, she is helping to ensure that a patient's preferences for care at the end of life are achieved, particularly when preferences rely on surrogate decision making.

"Research continues to bring us one step closer to better preparing families and patients for end of life."

— Karin T. Kirchhoff

With advance care planning, Kirchhoff explains, the patient, the surrogate, and the intervener leading the conversation discuss probable outcomes of the patient's situation

Bob Rashid



Upon joining the UW-Madison School of Nursing faculty in 2000, Karin T. Kirchhoff was named the Charlotte Jane and Ralph A. Rodefer Chair. The distinguished chair acknowledges a professor's scholarly accomplishments and vision, while simultaneously enabling the holder to continue efforts to expand research, pursue scholarship, and intellectually guide future nursing leaders and scientists.

and what the patient would like to see happen in each of those situations. "One family member was sure he met his mother's wishes," adds Kirchhoff, "but since we had knowledge of her wishes, we knew he did not. Advance care planning ensures that the patient be provided a death in accordance with his or her wishes."

Undergirding Kirchhoff's research in outpatient settings is her investigation into preparing families for withdrawal of life support in ICU settings. "The culture of this country centers on invincibility," Kirchhoff says. "We act as if death is an option." Statistics, however, demonstrate that approximately 20 percent of deaths in the U.S. occur in the ICU, adds Kirchhoff, a setting where patients and families are unprepared for death.

"Families need interventions to help prepare them for withdrawal of life support," Kirchhoff explains. "Research has shown that lack of preparation for death is associated with depression, anxiety, and complicated grief for

the family. As health care providers, we need to have a conversation with the family on what they will see, hear, or feel at the patient's bedside."

To this end, Kirchhoff has produced four intervention messages that help families better understand the signs of decline leading to death, such as changes in skin color and breathing patterns, temperature changes, and muscle spasms. "Once the family has decided to withdraw life support, under guidance from a physician," says Kirchhoff, "the message will prepare them for what will happen based on two clinical variables—time until death and presence of an endotracheal tube during withdrawal."

When joining the School of Nursing faculty in August of 2000, Kirchhoff brought with her a cache of scholarly accomplishments in evidence-based nursing practice—that is, practice that has been scientifically evaluated through published research. "Published research directs practice; practice does not

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Dean's Message



Katharyn A. May, DNSc, RN, FAAN
Dean and Professor
UW-Madison School of Nursing

If you attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Nursing's 2008 Littlefield Leadership Lecture this past September, you heard three nurse leaders in the areas of nursing policy and research describe pressing issues surrounding today's health care system. While our speakers—American Nurses' Association (ANA) President Rebecca Patton, MSN, RN, and nursing faculty Susan Heidrich, PhD, RN, and Susan Zahner, DrPH, RN—approach health care reform from different perspectives, they share similar concerns about the current state of affairs.

The facts are these. The U.S. health care system is in a state of crisis. Costs continue to rise astronomically, the public health workforce will soon be unable to keep up with growing demands, and a staggering fifty million Americans do not

have health insurance while another twenty-five million are underinsured. And there has been far too much rhetoric and far too little action.

I stand with my colleagues—these are vital concerns. I believe that access to necessary health care must be seen as a human right, not a luxury. I support the ANA position that all persons are entitled to ready access to quality and affordable health care services offered by an adequately sized and well-educated workforce.

And we all know what that means. Quality health care is safe, effective, and timely care that meets patients' needs and delivers appropriate and proven interventions. It is equitable, acknowledging but not discriminating on the basis of important factors such as culture, gender, and socioeconomic status. It is also patient-centered, ensuring that care is culturally appropriate, respectful of patients and their families, and actively involves consumers in managing their own health.

Access means that care is affordable and available to all who require services and that services are delivered in ways that reflect the realities of today, not outmoded patterns from the past.

The cost of health care is indeed a complex issue. But it's time for a shift in thinking. We must redirect the system away from overusing

expensive, acute-care, hospital-based services and toward more community-based, preventive care. Also, we must use our heads about the economics of care across a continuum of patient care settings—a research focus of Dr. Mary Ellen Murray, whose work is described in this issue of *Nursing Dimensions*. By investing resources in nursing education emphasizing prevention, health promotion, and responsibility for evaluating outcomes, we can provide better care and ensure better quality of life for patients while reducing costs.

Finally, the workforce—recruiting, educating, and retaining it—will be key to system reform. Current estimates predict a shortage of one million nurses by 2020. This shortage will affect every aspect of patient care. While we must do all we can to mitigate the effects of this shortage, let's be clear about how we got here. The U.S. government spends fifty times (\$8 billion yearly vs. \$156 million) more on medical than on nursing education. We cannot prepare nurses for tomorrow if we don't have the financial support for teachers and adequate teaching facilities today.

The time to reform the system is now. Working together—providers, consumers, policy makers, and industry leaders—we can build an affordable health care system for everybody.



Karen Kehl, PhD (right), who received her doctorate in May of 2007, worked closely with Kirchhoff, her major advisor, throughout the nursing doctoral program. Currently, Kehl is completing a postdoctoral research training scholarship with the Institute of Clinical and Translational Research (ICTR) at the UW-Madison and credits Kirchhoff with "demonstrating the integration of clinical practice needs, education, and research."

very calm, very kind," Kirchhoff says. "Hospice offers patients an appreciation of life and a respectful death. The staff in the inpatient unit stand at attention as the deceased is removed from the premises. It's a very respectful way of honoring a life."

In December of 2008, Kirchhoff will retire from the UW-Madison School of Nursing. She leaves a legacy of research and scholarship on end-of-life care that will provide a framework for other nursing

interventions to support the emotional, spiritual, and cultural aspects of loss.

"Research continues to bring us one step closer to better preparing families and patients for end of life," says Kirchhoff, "but we need to speak a straightforward language with this kind of care: 'Achieving a cure for your illness may not be possible. If not, we will change goals to make you comfortable. We have other options.'"

It's a Matter of Economics

"Caring drives every aspect of the nursing profession. Today, when growing health care costs are squeezing accessibility and quality in health systems, care needs to develop a cost-conscious side," says nurse researcher Mary Ellen Murray, PhD, RN, of the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Nursing.

Murray, a professor of nursing and associate dean for academic affairs at the School of Nursing, examines the microeconomics of health care systems. She looks at ways to keep nursing clinical practice fiscally responsible.

"In a reformed health care system," Murray says, "nurses must demonstrate caring through fiscal responsibility. Nurses have a responsibility to the patient to use the most cost-efficient combination of resources to maximize health benefit." Understanding reimbursement systems, costs of care, patients' health insurance plans—it is all part of fiscal responsibility, Murray adds.

Take a geriatric patient who needs a prescription, but cannot afford it, Murray says. The nurse needs to discuss the problem with a physician and pharmacist or social worker who can help locate a low-cost drug program. "It is not caring," Murray says, "to discharge the patient with a prescription for a medication that is not affordable."

According to Murray, nurses also have a responsibility to use the employing institution's resources wisely to provide humane care through cost-effective measures. With the advent of electronic health records, she adds, data are immediately available to benefit clinical decision making. "Nurses will know that there's an infection rate popping up on a unit and can intervene very early because of quickly accessed data."

Nurse and institution, Murray adds, collectively have a social obligation to the payers of health care—the government, which is the largest purchaser of health care, and tax payers. "Because nurses are the largest sector of employees in the health care industry," she says, "they have the potential to decrease health care costs without compromising patient care."

As researcher and educator, Murray is helping ensure that future generations of nurses understand the pairing of fiscal responsibility with clinical competency. Her course, titled *Organizational Influences in Interdisciplinary Clinical Practice*, provides students with a look at the context of clinical practice—policy, politics, budgeting, and reimbursement systems.

"Quality, cost, sustainability—these are health care reform's hot buttons," says Dean Katharyn May. "Increasingly, nurses are called upon to consider factors related to safety, effectiveness, and cost in planning and delivering patient care. Fiscal responsibility in nursing will play a part in the school's new Doctor of Nursing Practice program. Dr. Murray's program of research will help develop nurse leaders who understand how to manage cost while ensuring humane patient care."

Murray signed on as associate dean for academic affairs, concurrent with her teaching and research responsibilities, about a year ago. The role of administrator feels very natural, says Murray, whose academic resume reflects numerous director, chairperson, consultant, and managerial roles. She recently completed her tenure as chairperson of the Interdisciplinary Research Group on Nursing Issues, a four-hundred member national-international group of health services researchers. She also was a key player in the development of the UW-Madison School of Nursing Western Campus, where she held a four-year position as director of its nursing program.

"The best part of this initiative was how it brought people together—from scheduling clinical facilities to linking School of Nursing faculty with those at



Mary Ellen Murray, PhD, RN
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
Associate Professor of Nursing



At a reception held in May of 2008 for nursing and pre-nursing students, Mary Ellen Murray welcomes guests to the School of Nursing. (See page 8 for details.)

Gundersen Lutheran Medical Foundation to merging resources on the UW-La Crosse and UW-Madison campuses," Murray explains. "It was a teamwork experience with cost-effective use of resources and sustaining benefit."

Murray is also co-chairperson of the UW-Madison Teaching Academy—a role she shares with Jeffrey Henriques, PhD, associate researcher at the School of Nursing. "Being part of a strategic effort to bring excellence in teaching and learning to the UW campus," Murray says, "is a teamwork experience I thrive on."

"Systems need to work for people," says Murray, who has brought her own blend of cost-conscious care to her home community of Baraboo, Wisconsin. Murray has logged hundreds of hours of service to community through volunteerism.

In 2004, Murray began volunteering with the Baraboo Food Pantry. Since that time, she has led drives to supply Thanksgiving dinners to families in the area and to provide

meals for school-aged children during spring recess, when they would otherwise receive meals in school programs. She worked with the Sauk County Master Gardeners' Association to plant a community garden, which supplies fresh produce to the food pantry. Recently, with the help of volunteers, Murray and her husband, Peter, organized "Neighborly," a store offering free clothing to community members.

"As intertwined as nursing is with commitment to care," Murray says, "so too is nursing with service. Service is part of nursing's professional life."

NURSING DIMENSIONS

Nursing Dimensions is written for alumni, friends, faculty, staff, and students of the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Nursing. It is published twice a year by the School of Nursing with assistance from the Wisconsin Alumni Association. The printing of this newsletter is funded by private contributions.

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direct publications," Kirchhoff explains. For Kirchhoff, the use of scientific evidence to guide nursing practice has been a part of her nursing scholarship since her doctoral student days. At that time, Kirchhoff targeted the restrictive policies placed on patients with myocardial infarction (heart attack). Kirchhoff's research involving EKG tracings in coronary patients refuted concerns about giving patients ice water.

Since then, her scholarship has produced nearly 140 publications and countless honors, including the 2008 Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association's Distinguished Researcher Award, the 2006 Midwest Nursing Research Society's End of Life and Palliative Care Nursing Advancement of Science Award, and the 2004 Alumni of the Year award from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan.

For Kirchhoff, the linchpin of professional nursing is the provision of humanistic patient care—the individualized relationship with the patient. As an educator, she uses hospice as a humanistic model for nursing students studying end-of-life care.

"The hospice environment captures how death ought to be—

Introducing School's Newest Nurse Researcher



Rebecca Muehrer, PhD, RN
Assistant Professor of Nursing

In fall of 2008, Rebecca Muehrer, PhD, RN, assistant professor of nursing, joined the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Nursing faculty. Muehrer's research focuses on improving the quality of life for kidney transplant recipients and persons with chronic kidney disease by addressing sexual concerns amenable to treatment.

"Research to date focuses mostly on the prevalence of sexual dysfunction," Muehrer says, "but in-depth knowledge about specific sexual concerns of kidney transplant recipients is lacking. Such knowledge will help me develop interventions to alleviate these concerns."

One concern reported by female kidney transplant patients is the incidence of urinary tract infections after having sex, Muehrer reports. "Transplant recipients are typically on several immunosuppressant medications to prevent rejection," she says. "These medications make them more susceptible to infections." A second area of concern, she adds, is not feeling comfortable discussing sexual issues with their health care providers.

Muehrer has developed the Sexual Concerns Questionnaire (SCQ) with participation from both kidney transplant recipients and their clinicians. The SCQ tool will help address kidney transplant patients' questions about sexual functioning and concerns about the potential health consequences of sexual activity. She plans to modify the SCQ to use with other transplant and chronic illness populations.

Muehrer received her education and training in nursing almost exclusively from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and its academic health center, the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics (UWHC). She completed her undergraduate degree in nursing in 2001 and her master's degree in 2003, specializing in medical-surgical nursing, followed by her doctorate in 2008.

While completing her graduate studies, Muehrer served as a clinical nurse specialist in the School of Medicine and Public Health's nephrology division. The

clinical nurse specialist role, she says, provided the opportunity to collaborate in her research with clinical colleagues in the Department of Medicine/Nephrology Section to address both medical and psychological challenges of kidney transplant patients— anemia management, adherence to a post-transplant immunosuppressant regimen, and overall quality of life following the transplant.

Muehrer will launch her academic career at the School of Nursing having amassed numerous awards for nursing scholarship early on in her nursing education. Among them are the Mary L. Keller Research Scholarship (2008), the Helen Bunge Memorial Scholarship (2002 and 2000), the Undergraduate Initiatives Scholarship (2000–2001), and the Lora L. Marshall Scholarship (2000).

"Because the UW-Madison is an exceptional institution that places strong emphasis on research," Muehrer says, "this is a very fertile environment from which to develop my program of research. The University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics also has an outstanding kidney transplant program—one of the largest in the country—that will advance my research." Guidance by mentor and faculty researcher Dorothy Lanuza, PhD, RN, FAAN, Muehrer adds, has emphasized the importance of research in the context of clinical practice.

In Other News

For the second consecutive year, a student from the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Nursing received the Hermes Monato Essay Prize from the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative (RWHC) for submitting the best essay on rural health.

Christi Barden, recipient of the \$1,000 prize, is enrolled in the statewide "BSN@Home" collaborative nursing program. The online program provides associate-degree registered nurses the opportunity to complete a baccalaureate nursing degree through any of the UW System's five nursing programs.

The essay prize was established in 1993 to honor the memory of Hermes Monato, Jr., a 1990 graduate of the UW-Madison who worked at the RWHC in Sauk City, Wisconsin. In 2007, Pam Myhre, a master's student at the UW-Madison School of Nursing, won the award.

Early-entry doctoral student **Denise Contreras** was recently awarded an Altrusa International scholarship for academic achievement as an adult learner. She also received a \$1,000 scholarship from the National Association of Hispanic Nurses (NAHN) for demonstrating the promise of professional contributions to nursing and

the potential to act as a role model for other aspiring nursing students. She was presented the award at NAHN's thirty-third national conference held in Boston in July of 2008.

Undergraduate honors and early-entry doctoral student **Andrea Gilmore** received the Hilldale Undergraduate/Faculty Research Fellowship for 2008. Her research will examine how nursing home nurses identify pain in residents with dementia and how they decide when to intervene with analgesics. She will present her findings at the 2009 Undergraduate Symposium held on the UW-Madison campus.

The Hilldale Fellowship provides \$4,000 per student and up to \$1,000 in faculty support for expenses related to the research project. Applicants are judged on the quality of their research proposals and originality and intellectual significance of their research.

Through the efforts of **Louise Root-Robbins**, PhD, RN, director of diversity and community outreach initiatives, some of Wisconsin's tribal communities will be included in the PBS series titled *The Culture*

of Health. The twenty-six-episode series, which begins production in November of 2008, will be aired nationwide and will focus on helping consumers, regardless of their cultural background, to obtain information that improves health and quality of care. The series will be produced in two parts—the first thirteen episodes in 2009; the second group in 2010. Each episode will include a companion continuing education activity focused on developing cultural competency skills for nurses and other health care professionals.

Root-Robbins is currently working with the PBS series' producers and the School of Nursing's Continuing Education in Nursing program to develop an online CEU course aimed at promoting increased cultural competency skills. Nurses and health care workers throughout the United States will have access to the course and be able to obtain continuing education credits. Plans are under way to use the course offering to train nurses and other health professionals at surrounding hospitals and clinics that serve Wisconsin tribal community members. To support the efforts of Root-Robbins, the school has received a private donation of \$25,000 from Mary Enroth, president of the Palmer Foundation.

International Health Care: One Nurse's Perspective



Bruce Frederick, BS'72, MN, RN

Bruce Frederick, MN, RN, has a global perspective on nursing. With ten years as a consultant for Joint Commission International (JCI), Frederick has visited hospitals in twenty-four countries. He has seen an upward swing in quality of health care and in the status of nurses worldwide, as more hospitals seek international accreditation.

"In the United States, nurses are professionals who are considered an integral part of the health care team, but in many countries, that's not the case," says Frederick, a 1972 alumnus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Nursing. "In most hospitals, nurses are more of an assistant to the physician. The Joint Commission standards require nurses to make assessments and to document their actions to ensure that certain quality and safety factors are in place. As a result, nurses have become a major contributor to the patient's plan of care."

JCI is a division of Joint Commission Resources (JCR), which has been accrediting international hospitals since 1999. JCR is the consulting arm of The Joint Commission, which accredits health care organizations in the United States. To date, 190 hospitals have been accredited in thirty-three countries, and it is projected that nearly two hundred more hospitals will be surveyed within the next two years.

As consultant and team leader, Frederick inspects hospitals and helps administrators create action plans to meet international standards and become accredited. He led the first consulting teams to hospitals in China, the Philippines, Bahrain, Pakistan, and India, among other countries.

Frederick has more than twenty-five years' experience in various chief nursing executive roles both in the United States and abroad. He first became interested in international consulting in 1991 while working as the chief nursing officer at King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.



In May of 2008, Nurses' Day was held at Clifford Hospital in Guangzhou, China, drawing seven hundred health care professionals to a banquet provided by the hospital. Bruce Frederick and colleague Roberta Fruth, PhD, RN, FAAN, consultant for JCR (center), celebrated the occasion with nine Chinese nurse leaders.

"When I was chief nurse, we had nurses from thirty-six countries," Frederick recalls. "It was a melting pot of cultures."

Later, after training in Chicago, he was assigned to international work in the Middle East, Europe, South America, and Asia. For three years, he consulted full-time, but the relentless travel caused him to miss important family events. Subsequently, he and his wife, Linda—also a registered nurse—decided it would be better if he reduced his commitment.

Now, at age sixty, Frederick enjoys semi-retirement and works out of his home in Hayward, Wisconsin. He travels one week each month for JCI. Additionally, he works with two hospitals on a permanent basis, visiting them twice a year.

Because hospitals must be re-accredited every three years, Frederick explains, some ask JCI to return on a regular basis in order to stay current with updated standards. Accordingly, he visits Clifford Hospital in Guangzhou, China, and Dr. Erfan and Bagedo General Hospital in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Like many hospitals outside the U.S., both are privately owned.

Clifford Hospital was accredited in 2003 and again in 2006—the first in China to gain that distinction. The hospital, built by Clifford Pang, an engineer and businessman, provides care for people who reside in his vast retirement communities. Clifford Hospital holds five hundred beds—its size better visualized when compared with the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics, which holds 471 beds. Frederick oversaw the project from the ground up.

"We educated the leaders on The Joint Commission standards, looked at the architectural drawings, and recommended various changes," says Frederick. "We came back a year later and the hospital was built."

"When one hospital in a country becomes accredited, other hospitals take note," says Frederick. "In China, for example, there are a number of

hospitals going through the accreditation process. All of a sudden the bar is raised in the country relative to health care."

At Clifford Hospital, Frederick notes, nurses now greet patients as they enter, assess their needs, and make recommendations to the physicians.

"Nurses have become a stronger member of the health care team," Frederick says. "I've seen resistance to this in other parts of the world. In a few countries it has taken some time for physicians to come around to the fact that these standards require nursing to be a strong part of the patient's care. But overall, I've seen the transition go very well."



In Memory

Bob Rashid, talented photographer and writer, passed away on October 9, 2008. Bob was truly a member of the UW-Madison School of Nursing community, capturing our achievements through his beautiful photographs and stories. His presence at the school will be long remembered. (Story on this page was written by Bob Rashid.)

It's a Family Affair

For the Southards, nursing is a family affair. What makes this family unique is that all three Southards—father Greg and sons Zach and Sam—are nurses. And two of the three have studied at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Nursing. Zach is a 2008 graduate; Sam is a senior nursing student.

Three male nurses in one family confound statistical probability. According to the National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses, 5.4 percent of American RNs are men. In contrast, male students make up

his professional satisfaction was not lost on his sons.

"I definitely was influenced by the fact that both my dad and my brother were nurses," says Sam. "But I also went into the profession because I enjoy health science. Nursing allows me to study what I enjoy most and to work in a hospital, which I think is a great environment.

"You have all sorts of people involved in taking care of a patient—respiratory therapists, occupational therapists, pharmacists, social workers, doctors, physician

and working with these patients, you see things you just wouldn't see at other places. I did an externship in Appleton, but you just don't see the acute populations, transplant procedures, and some of the different devices that you see here."

Like his brother, Zach says that his father was a strong influence on his decision to pursue a career in nursing. "Seeing him do it while I was growing up definitely influenced my decision," Zach says. "He'd come home from work and talk about it, and it was clear he got a lot of satisfaction from working with and helping people. As a profession, it gives you a lot of possibilities, too. At some point, I'd probably like to go to anesthesia school. The UWMC and



Zach (left) and Sam (right) Southard learned early on from Greg, their father and role model, that nursing was indeed a career option for men.

15 percent of the newly admitted 2008 undergraduate class at the UW-Madison School of Nursing. As part of the commitment of the school to increase diversity, says Louise Root-Robbins, PhD, RN, director of diversity and community outreach initiatives, it is making a concerted effort to recruit men into nursing.

While father Greg Southard admits that his gender has always been in the minority since he entered the nursing profession twenty-one years ago, he says that he has never felt a trace of discrimination. "There have been very few gender issues that I've been aware of," says Greg, who is a staff RN in the recovery room at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Appleton. "There are now a considerably higher number of males in the profession than there were twenty years ago, which is good. Male nurses complement the profession very well. In some ways, males and females are very different. But I think that difference makes for a well-balanced team."

The one-time welder who went to nursing school at the age of thirty has been a powerful role model for his sons. He says that his nursing career has been extremely fulfilling and believes that

assistants. They all have something different to bring to the table."

Sam's academic experience at the School of Nursing has been extremely positive, he says. He believes that he is getting a superior education and an unbeatable experience. He recently completed a ten-week externship at the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and loved the teamwork and exposure to professionals from different disciplines. The externship has led to a job offer in the coming year at the hospital, which he has accepted.

Sam's brother, Zach Southard, graduated this past May from the School of Nursing. He is already working at the UWHC as an RN in the cardiothoracic unit. According to Zach, he has seen procedures and treatments that are unique to an academic medical center. The professional experiences gained here and at the School of Nursing, he says, are what initially led him to Madison.

"I chose the UW-Madison School of Nursing because it's renowned as one of the finest schools of nursing in the country and certainly one of the best in Wisconsin," Zach says. "Being in Madison

"I chose the UW-Madison School of Nursing because it's renowned as one of the finest schools of nursing in the country and certainly one of the best in Wisconsin."

— Zach Southard

the School of Nursing encourage that.

"A lot of hospitals shy away from someone who's going to turn around and pursue a career specialty. The UWHC and the school really support professional career advancement."

Zach adds that being a male nurse and, therefore, in the minority, was never a factor when he was in nursing school, either. "I never felt any kind of attitude or feeling about it in any way, shape, or form," he says. "I never had a single complaint about the faculty, and the vast majority of my professors were just great. I wouldn't go back and change anything about the school. I would highly recommend it."

Please contact Steven Rush, PhD, RN, director of undergraduate programs at the School of Nursing, at srush2@wisc.edu for information on Men Engaged in Nursing (MEN) and the Madison Chapter of the American Association of Men in Nursing (AAMN), both student-initiated organizations.

Aspiring Nurses' Association Creates Kinship

If you want a job done right, ask a group of aspiring nurses to do it.

In 2005, some pre-nursing students wanted to show their collective interest in learning about the profession of nursing. They completed the paperwork and obtained approval from the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus to form their own group—and the Aspiring Nurses' Association (ANA) was born.

Today, two hundred members strong, the ANA is providing pre-nursing students with support and opportunities to connect through study groups and community service projects.

"Their efforts show their commitment to learn about the nursing profession."

— Cortney Brassler

"Students enter the nursing major in their junior year," explains pre-nursing student adviser Nancy Wiley, BA'78, "so pre-nursing students don't know whether they'll be admitted to the nursing major until the end of their sophomore year." The association provides these students with a way to learn about the nursing profession and

the School of Nursing, Wiley adds.

The ANA places significant emphasis on the group's community service and fundraising efforts include the Capitol Lakes retirement community, the Alzheimer's Association, Ronald McDonald House, Special Olympics, Relay for Life, and Girls, Inc., an afterschool program for at-risk girls.

The fledgling association created several leadership positions, including co-chairs for community service, fundraising, and public relations. "Our co-chairs work hard to find volunteer opportunities, and other members step up during the year to present community service ideas they've discovered on their own," says Cortney Brassler, a sophomore pre-nursing student and current ANA president. "They take ownership and get the group going."

Some ANA members volunteer once or twice a week, adds Brassler. "Their efforts show their commitment to learn about the nursing profession."

To join the ANA, pre-nursing students pay membership dues of \$5 per semester and earn points by participating in community service projects and attending meetings. Last year, the association's bimonthly meetings at Grainger Hall routinely attracted one hundred-plus members. Membership fees cover pizza at meetings, and last year, the group bought T-shirts, increasing their visibility on campus.

Wiley advises all freshmen students at the UW-Madison who intend to apply to the School of Nursing to do so during their sophomore year. "When they come to freshmen orientation, I have them send an e-mail to the ANA's president so that they get involved right away," she says.

"It can be stressful for students not knowing if they're going to be accepted into this major, which is highly competitive," Wiley adds. "They're all in the same boat and can give each other information about what courses they're taking and what volunteering they're doing. This group gives them the support they need." Wiley also helps pre-nursing students line up faculty speakers and develop relationships with the School of Nursing.

The faculty and current students provide the aspiring nurses with an insider's look at nursing school and answer their questions. "We have a ton of questions," Brassler says. "The ANA has helped me discover qualities in myself that will help my future nursing career. I've been able to hone my communication skills, and that is the key in any relationship."

The association has opened a lot of doors and provided her with numerous friends, Brassler says, and the volunteer opportunities are fun. "Whenever you get a group of nurses together, it's a great time."



Members of the Aspiring Nurses' Association (ANA) participated in the Alzheimer's Memory Walk on September 27, 2008, at Warner Park in Madison. They are (front row, from left) Melissa Rahn, Ginny Dorscheid, Courtney Buss, Katie Egan, Marissa Mullins, Ana Alan, Sarah Violante, Jennifer Krueger, Abby Lucke, (back row) Max Chambers, Stephanie Schrack, Katie Johnston, Lindsey Parker, Lindsay Burke, Sybille Schumacher, Chelsea Korthals, Sara Taylor, Lauren Wisdom, Katie Cyrzan, and Breana Mudrock.

Connecting the Dots

Each student wore a colored dot—pink, green, yellow, or red. The dot represented the student’s academic status; wearing the dot represented a shared goal—to become a nurse.

In early May of 2008, graduating, continuing, incoming, and pre-nursing students gathered in a reception room at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Nursing, joined by nursing faculty and staff, to celebrate the school year’s end. The 2008 nursing graduates wore the pink dot; newly admitted and current students donned the green and yellow dots, respectively; and the pre-nursing students, who were

completing course requirements in preparation for applying to the School of Nursing, wore the red dot.

“Welcome,” began Dean Katharyn May. “To those of you who are graduating, I offer my sincerest congratulations. You will soon realize, if you don’t already, the value of all your hard work and the advantages that your outstanding education at UW-Madison will give you. To those new, current, and aspiring nursing students, take advantage of all the opportunities around you to learn from each other about the wider world reflected right here in the vibrant, multicultural environment found on the Madison campus.”

The reception represented membership from numerous campus student organizations: the Aspiring Nurses’ Association (ANA), the Multicultural Student Nurses’ Organization (MSNO), the Student Nurses’ Association (SNA), and Men Engaged in Nursing (MEN).

“This year-end gathering will hopefully build relationships and camaraderie that will carry us into the coming academic year,” said Louise Root-Robbins, PhD, RN, director of diversity and community outreach, who organized the event. “Connectedness and inclusivity are priorities of our school.”

Top photos from left: Associate Dean Mary Ellen Murray (right) welcomes 2008 incoming students Natalie Hogan (left) and Natalee Lales to the School of Nursing. Current student Autherine Ikanih (middle) enjoys food and conversation with newly admitted students Kari Porter (left) and Jennifer Nelson (right). Chelsie Larsen, donning her “Sconnie” T-shirt, enjoys getting together with fellow nursing students before her May 2008 graduation.

Bottom photos from left: Faculty member Linda Reivitz talks with Nadifa Mohamed, an international nursing student graduating in May of 2008. Graduating senior Chiebonam Oraedu (right) shares some insights about nursing school with incoming student Leah Van Sliedrecht. Student advisor Amanda Fox (left) gets to know newly admitted student Kari Porter. Dean May chats with new admittee Trenell “Tre” Darby (second from left) and pre-nursing students Ellie Voelker (left) and Cortney Brassler.

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