
From the Editor

Nursing Activism and Scholarship to Address Health Disparities

This issue represents a collaborative initiative between *Nursing Research* and *Advances in Nursing Science*. We both put forth a call for manuscripts that address the issue of health disparities. As a result, both journals are featuring articles related to this topic in the September 2005 issues.

There is ample documentation worldwide that confirms tragic disparities in health status based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other factors. However, 2 great mysteries remain: what creates and sustains these disparities and what is to be done to reduce or eliminate them.

Nursing has a long legacy of reaching out to serve those who are underserved, and of developing community programs to empower people who are disadvantaged and disenfranchised. Nursing professional organizations have a strong history of supporting social policies and programs to improve the health of all people, particularly those who are less fortunate. Other groups of people have devoted substantial resources and years of dedication attempting to right the wrongs of health disparities. However, the realities of disparities in health remain, weakening the very fabric of communities worldwide.

Advocacy and activism are vital if the realities of disparities in health status are to change. However, advocacy and activism can be substantially strengthened with strong

foundations in research and scholarship. Nurse advocacy and activism have made important marks in many communities, but the outcomes of nursing efforts to address health disparities have far too often gone unnoticed and undocumented. Anecdotal accounts of remarkable accomplishments by nurses and other activists are moving, but they do not form a basis for replicating or expanding that which has seemed effective in any given instance. Even more fundamentally, underlying hegemonic conceptual ideas that shape circumstances creating and sustaining health disparities have rarely been challenged. Vital philosophic and conceptual challenges to that which is taken for granted hold a key to breaking open new possibilities for action.

These issues of *Advances in Nursing Science* and *Nursing Research* offer collections of research and theoretical/philosophic insights that can serve as models for future scholarship, and as inspiration for future advocacy and activism. These authors are activists in the finest sense—challenging that which has been taken for granted and searching for evidence that can shape action to bring about meaningful change toward improving the health of those who need it the most. If as professional nurses we move to the next logical steps according to the works of these authors, we will indeed make a major mark toward righting the wrongs of health disparities.

—**Peggy L. Chinn, PhD, RN, FAAN**
Editor