REPORT: CONFERENCE ATTENDED IN CARDIFF, WALES: 24-27 MARCH 2009

THE 2009 RCN INTERNATIONAL NURSING RESEARCH CONFERENCE: CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF NURSING RESEARCH: LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN), a trade union organisation for nurses and midwives from the United Kingdom (UK) hosts an annual International Nursing Research Conference at different venues throughout the UK. The theme for the 2009 conference was “Celebrating 50 years of nursing research: looking back, moving forward”. This conference, hosted in the Cardiff city hall 24-27 March 2009, was attended by 420 delegates from 22 countries. A keynote address was presented every morning. During the course of the conference six symposia, 60 posters, and more than 200 concurrent papers were presented. Specific issues were also addressed by specialist panels during early morning breakfast sessions, lunch time sessions and late afternoon sessions. It became quite a challenge to decide which sessions to attend every day, with so many concurrent events going on at the same time.

OVERVIEW OF SOME OF THE CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Keynote addresses

The opening address was presented by Dr Peter Carter, Chief Executive and General Secretary, Royal College of Nursing. He addressed nursing excellence through evidence, maintaining that much evidence is based on the quest for quality and effectiveness demanded by the nurses themselves and by the public served by nurses. The need to provide a context for evidence-based care was stressed. He set the tone for the conference by stating emphatically:
“Nurses as the key professional health care providers are more than ever challenged to be in the forefront of knowledge production, continual validation and application of knowledge in the service of our communities and populations. We are challenged to find new and better ways of promoting health, better ways of preventing disease, and better and cost-effective ways of caring, curing and rehabilitation. This is nursing’s contract with society and the road map for excellence in care” (RCN, 2009:3).

Professor Dame Julie Macleod Clark, from the University of Southampton (UK), explained the importance of looking back and moving forward by pursuing the science of nursing interventions. Looking back, some evidence has been accumulated on which to base nursing interventions. However, this evidence needs to be re-evaluated constantly by applying it in practice situations. Much research continues to be conducted by individuals on isolated topics focusing on nurses rather than on nursing. Future evidence-based research should enable the nursing profession to define the outcomes of nursing contributions to patient care.

Professor Martin McKee, from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, presented the second day’s keynote addressing “the contribution of research to health improvement”. He questioned why much money spent on research and on health care makes little or no impact at the point delivery; without much benefit to the patients suffering from many ailments and diseases. The final keynote address, entitled “Nursing research in the trenches: continuity during transitions for individuals with chronic infections”, was presented by Professor Margaret Harrison from Queen’s University, Ontario, Canada. She addressed challenges encountered by persons suffering from chronic conditions, as identified during 15 years of research. Such research needs to address the patients’ needs, the accessible health services and the needs for home health care and for self care.

**Concurrent and panel sessions**

The concurrent sessions addressed numerous and diverse issues such as mental health, medication adherence, research methods, nurse prescribing, midwifery, research policy and practice, education and the workforce, recruitment and retention, qualitative research, patient and public involvement in health care. I presented a paper entitled “Factors influencing patients’ adherence to anti-retroviral therapy in Botswana” (authors: E Kip, VJ Ehlers & DM vd Wal) during a session on medication adherence. Other papers presented during this session included the content validity of a medication adherence instrument and childhood immunisation adherence. Lifely debates followed these presentations.

Professor Alison Tierney, editor-in-chief of the Journal of Advanced Nursing, presented sessions on “Publishing from research” and “How do we assess the quality of published research?”. During both these sessions the importance of publishing research findings, and of evaluating the quality of published research reports on an ongoing basis, were emphasised by presenters and delegates.
CONCLUSION

The conference concluded on Friday 27 March 2009 with specific sessions for student nurses. This proved to be very popular and an effective way of involving students in discussions about current professional issues. Every delegate received a book of abstracts which proves to be very useful. As all meals and refreshments were served in a huge hall where all the exhibitions and posters were displayed, there was ample opportunity to view and discuss the posters. These discussions during refreshment breaks proved to be as valuable as the presentations. More information about the RCN, and about their annual research conferences, can be accessed at www.rcn.org.uk

Reference:


Acknowledgement

I wish to thank Unisa for affording me the opportunity to attend this worthwhile conference.