

News Briefs

Tragedy in America

America, including some of our fellow nurses, has suffered a tragic loss. Messages of condolence and outreach and requests for thoughts and prayers by nurses around the world have poured in to Sigma Theta Tau International in recent weeks.

We ask you to visit our Web site, www.nursingsociety.org, to read these messages and stories from your colleagues and share your own. Our hope is to unite the community of nurses during this time of misfortune.

Register for convention the easy way

Now online, the 36th Biennial Convention registration brochure provides attendees with all the information they will need while in Indianapolis this November. If you are planning to attend and have not yet registered, there's still time! Register online at www.nursingsociety.org before the October 15, 2001, deadline. For more information, e-mail indy01@stti.iupui.edu or call 888.634.7575.

Tribute to President Patricia Thompson

If you would like to write a letter acknowledging President Thompson for her service to Sigma Theta Tau International, please send it to Sigma Theta Tau International, c/o Margie Wilson, 550 West North Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202. The due date is October 31, 2001. Letters will be collected and presented to President Thompson during the 36th Biennial Convention.

Honor Society of Nursing Sigma Theta Tau International

EXCELLENCE

in Nursing Education

Fourth Quarter 2001 Volume 2, Number 4

www.nursingsociety.org

Are two heads better than one?

Students and educators explore dyad testing

By Sharon A. Vinten and Marsha L. Ellett

As nurse educators learn the advantages of cooperative learning from other disciplines, many have begun to incorporate these concepts into their teaching. Dyad testing, one form of cooperative effort, consists of two or more students taking an examination together—discussing questions and answers before submitting final responses for faculty evaluation. As nursing education continues to shift to a student-centered, active learning paradigm, testing students as part of a group enhances the cooperative effort and initiates the collaborative decision-making situations students will encounter in the nursing world.

Johnson, Johnson (1989) and Bruffee (1999) have used cooperative and collaborative learning extensively in education since the 1970s when it was introduced. Group learning has worked well in laboratory settings in the sciences and is used from kindergarten through the collegiate level. Learning in this manner promotes interdependence, socialization, indi-

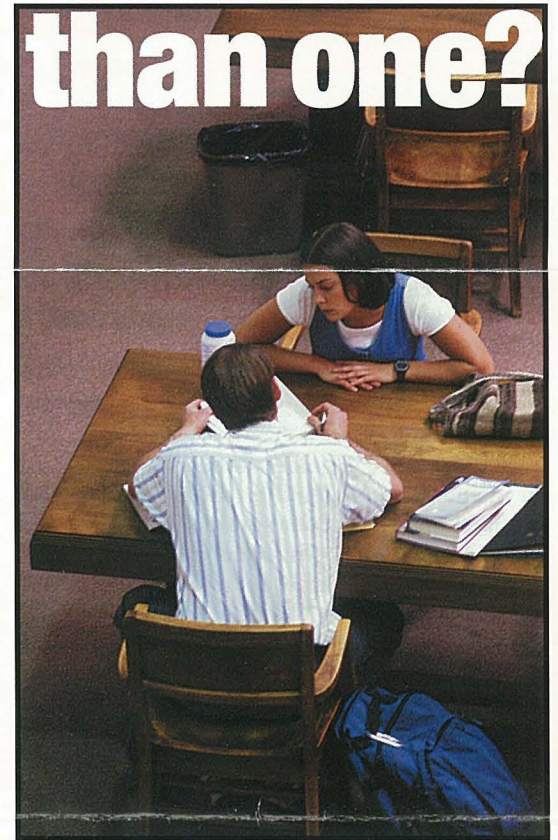
vidual accountability, group processing and group skills (Johnson & Johnson 1989).

Student reaction to dyad testing

We have found that dyad testing accomplished several outcomes, some purposeful, others unintentional. Based on written and verbal evaluation after testing, students reported reduced levels of anxiety during the examinations, a sense that discussions promoted teaching and learning while being tested, and that teamwork and communication were enhanced, as found in the work environment. Students appreciated the feedback provided by partners when providing a rationale for one response over another. These critical-thinking skills allowed students to critique answers from a different (partner) perspective and validated that "two heads are better than one."

Testing in groups was not problem-free. Additional faculty to proctor examinations was

ARE TWO HEADS BETTER THAN ONE? PAGE 2 ▶



With dyad testing, students work together on exam questions and enhance teamwork and critical-thinking skills.

Nurses lead evidence-based practice initiatives

By Suzanne Prevost

The Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International, in conjunction with Nursing Spectrum, is pleased to announce winners of the inaugural *Innovations in Clinical Excellence* contest, a program designed to recognize exemplars that champion the value and importance of evidence-based practice in nursing.

"Sigma Theta Tau International is proud to recognize excellence in evidence-based practice," says Patricia E. Thompson, RN, EdD, president of Sigma Theta Tau International. "The society has always held a strong commitment to advancing and promoting nursing research and disseminating research findings, particularly those that are readily integrated into practice. A program such as *Innovations in Clinical Excellence* affords nurse clinicians, educators and administrators an additional method of communicating the impact of nursing research to the profession, to other disciplines and to the public, which ultimately advances recognition of the science of nursing."

Nurse educators are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of teaching evidence-based practice to their students.

"Evidence-based practice must become the preeminent focus of nurse educators, nurse administrators and clinicians in all roles and settings in order for us to continue to be respected and valued as both an academic/scientific discipline and a profession," says Phyllis S. Brenner, RN, PhD, professor of nursing and

Improving nursing's first impression

Study finds course catalogs likely turnoff for prospective nurses

By Jennifer L. Hobbs and Melodie Daniels

What does it take to be a nurse? As students ponder the possibilities, many become acquainted with nursing's course requirements by navigating their school's academic catalog. Unfortunately, many prospective students are discovering that maneuvering through catalogs is no walk in the park.

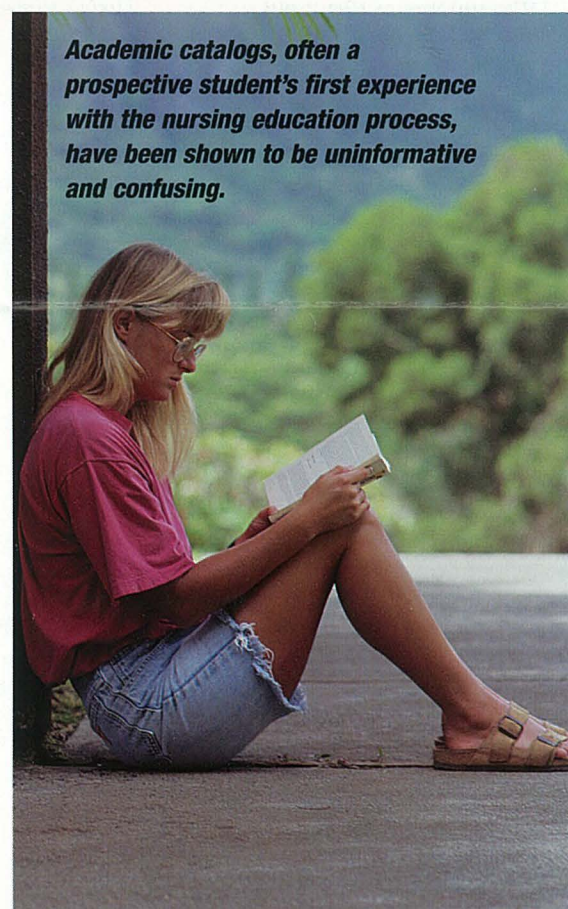
Initially, a review of nursing program catalogs was completed in order to design a tool that would help nurse managers properly place new graduates based on the educational focus of the students' nursing programs. However, the investigational study returned findings that were unexpected and alarming given the current need to attract the best and brightest students into nursing.

Early results surprising

The study began when we, as senior nursing students at San Diego State University, reviewed catalogs from every nursing program in the state of California. This included programs that offered a two-year degree, RN-to-BSN program and four-year degree. Seventy-five out of 104 programs agreed to participate in the study.

The catalogs proved to be difficult to read, prerequisites were not clear, admission

IMPROVING NURSING PAGE 3 ▶



Academic catalogs, often a prospective student's first experience with the nursing education process, have been shown to be uninformative and confusing.

PRACTICE INITIATIVES PAGE 2 ▶



Sigma Theta Tau International

Honor Society of Nursing

Staff

Nancy Dickenson-Hazard
Publisher

Kathy Bennis
Managing Editor

Amy Macke
Editor

Diane Billings
Theresa Valiga
Editorial Advisors

Linda Canter
Editorial Assistant

Rachael McLaughlin
Advertising

Contributing Authors

Melodie Daniels

Marsha L. Ellett

Anne Hennessy

Jennifer L. Hobbs

Suzanne Prevost

Sharon A. Vinten

Excellence in Nursing Education is published quarterly for members of the Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International. Mail inquiries to Amy Macke, 550 West North Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202 or e-mail: amy@stti.iupui.edu. Views expressed herein are not necessarily those of Sigma Theta Tau International.

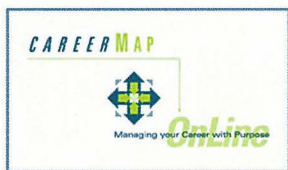
Essential nursing career information available online

Visit www.nursingsociety.org/career/cmap.html

Let the Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International, assist you every step of your nursing career. From the prospective student to the experienced nursing professional, *CareerMap Online* offers invaluable resources at no cost.

"This service effectively helps students and nurses find answers to questions about their careers," says Sigma Theta Tau International director of professional development Linda Finke, RN, PhD. "Whether it's one-on-one advice from an experienced nurse, profiles of successful nursing careers or specific tips for a healthy career, the *CareerMap* resource is an excellent opportunity for anyone interested in nursing careers."

Answering questions such as "What is a nurse?" "How do I become a nurse?" and "Where should I work?" *CareerMap Online* guides students as they explore nursing and provides scholarship, occupational outlook and Sigma Theta Tau International membership information. And soon, another resource for students will be offered through *CareerMap Online*. Kaplan's nursing division has developed a career



Have a career question you would like to ask one of our experienced nurses on staff? Visit our Web site and e-mail an expert today!

assessment tool for Sigma Theta Tau that provides teenagers and other individuals a fun, easy way to decide if nursing is right for them. Look for this exciting tool on our Web site in the future.

For more experienced nurses, *CareerMap Online* currently offers the following tools and information.

LOOKING IN NEW DIRECTIONS?

Whether you are already a nurse or are thinking about becoming one, uncover the rewards nursing has for you. Perfect for people ready to move in a new direction.

NEED MORE LEARNING AND CREDENTIALS? In the fast-paced world of health care, nurses with advanced degrees can open exciting new doors in their careers and greatly increase their earnings options. Discover the benefits and how-to's of advanced degrees, certifications and other opportunities.

ACTIVE RETIREMENT? Retirement isn't what it used to be. From philanthropy and volunteering to leadership and writing, now retirees are enjoying exciting opportunities in a wide range of fields. Learn how you can successfully transition into a rewarding and active retirement. ■



PRACTICE INITIATIVES FROM PAGE 1

coordinator of nursing research at Madonna University College of Nursing and Health, Livonia, Mich. "As educators we must become role models and exemplars in critical thinking. At this time, more so than at any other time, traditions and convenience must be replaced with evidence-based practices."

"We are delighted to serve as co-sponsors of the evidence-based practice contest with Sigma Theta Tau," says Patti Rager, RN, MSN, MBA, president and publisher of *Nursing Spectrum*. "Our mission to support and recognize registered nurses is at the heart of all we do at *Nursing Spectrum*. This opportunity to recognize registered nurses who put their outstanding research into everyday practice is our true pleasure and honor. These nurses are shining examples of professionals who bring research to life to benefit patients and the health care colleagues who care for them."

Winners of Innovations in Clinical Excellence are:

MARY KAY BADER, RN, MSN, CCRN, CNRN, Mission Hospital Regional Medical Center; Mission Viejo, Calif., "Using a FOCUS-PDCA Quality Improvement Model for Applying the Severe Traumatic Brain Injury Guidelines to Practice: Process and Outcomes"

MARYANNE CROWTHER, RN, APNC,

Jersey Shore Medical Center; Ocean, N.J., "Evidence-Based Development of a Heart Failure Center"

DIANE HALEEN, RN, MN, Harvard University Health Service; Cambridge, Mass., "Developing an Organized System of Care for College Students with Alcohol Abuse and Alcohol Dependence"

S. JILL LEY, RN, MS, CCRN, CNS, California Pacific Medical Center; San Francisco, Calif., "Cardiac Surgery in an Era of Antiplatelet Therapies: Generating New Evidence"

MICHELE WAGNER, RN, APN, ISS Nursing, University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics; Iowa City, Iowa, "Using Existing Databases for Product Evaluation: Silver-Treated Catheter Trial"

Innovations in Clinical Excellence winners will be formally recognized during the "Welcome Circle of Friends" reception on Saturday, November 10, 2001, at Sigma Theta Tau International's 36th Biennial Convention in Indianapolis, Ind. Contest winners have also been invited to present their submissions as poster presentations during Clinical Sessions Day, Sunday, November 11, 2001.

Suzanne Prevost, RN, PhD, is a professor and NHC chair of excellence in nursing at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tenn. She is also the chair of the Evidence-Based Practice Workgroup.

TWO HEADS BETTER THAN ONE? FROM PAGE 1

necessary as students were placed in several rooms during the examinations to reduce noise distractions. Additional testing time was necessary to allow students to collaboratively review, provide rationale for responses and revise test responses as necessary. Students feared the unprepared partner, being slow in comparison to their dyad test mate and raised concerns that the chosen student "might not want me as a partner."

Implementing a dyad testing option

Partner or dyad testing was established with the following ground rules. It had to meet the outcomes of the course, program and the undergraduate learning principles of the university. As faculty, we wanted to continue to evaluate students individually to be certain they had the knowledge to be safe practitioners. Thus, dyad testing was used for only one of four examinations for the course.

Dyad testing was implemented in this manner. Students were exposed to dyad testing the first day of classes, and the process was reviewed again several days prior to the examination. Each student was given the choice of testing individually or in a dyad. A faculty member in the usual testing situation monitored those choosing to test individually. Students electing to dyad testing put their names into a "hat" and then randomly selected their partners' names. Partners moved to rooms that contained only pairs testing in dyads. Each dyad determined how they would complete the examination. Some chose to complete the examination individually first and then collaborate; others began working together immediately. As faculty we had determined that each student would have his or her own computer score sheet, and answers between partners did not have to agree. We had also predetermined that 25 percent additional time would be given as time for collaboration and discussion between the partners.

The same examination was given to those who dyad and individually tested. Discussions were encouraged but at a pitch that would not disturb others in the room. We also allowed the termination of the dyad during the exam if students felt the partnership was not working. This never occurred.

Examination scores have been consistent. In an associate nursing course, scores remained approximately 6 percent above the other examination scores in the course. In a baccalaureate nursing course, students who dyad tested scored 5 percent higher.

Is dyad testing for you?

We found dyad testing being used in nursing settings throughout the country. Two studies have been completed and published in nursing at this point

(Durrant, Pierson, & Allen, 1985, Phillips, 1988). No one has yet studied issues dealing with learning disabled students or those with English as a second language in relation to dyad testing. As with any other assessment and learning strategy, dyad testing has advantages and disadvantages that need to be studied further to determine its most appropriate use. ■

Sharon A. Vinten, RNC, MSN, WHNP, is a clinical assistant professor with Indiana University School of Nursing. Marsha L. Ellett, RN, DNS, is an assistant professor with Indiana University School of Nursing.

References

Bruffee, K. A. (1999). *Collaborative learning. Higher education, interdependence, and the*

authority of knowledge (2nd ed.). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Durrant, L. K., Pierson, G., & Allen, E. M. (1985). Group testing and its effectiveness in learning selected nursing concepts. *Royal Society of Health*, 107-111.

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1989). *Cooperation and competition: Theory and research*. Edina, MA: Interaction Book.

Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., & Holubec, E. H. (1994). *The new circles of learning: Cooperation in the classroom and school*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

Phillips, A. P. (1988). Reducing nursing students' anxiety level and increasing retention of materials. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 27, 35-41.

Nurse joins *Woman's Day* magazine health advisory board

Recognizing that nurses were not included on the advisory boards of some well-known magazines, Sigma Theta Tau member and past president Vernice Ferguson, RN, FRCN, FAAN, wrote compelling letters to the editors-in-chief of *Woman's Day* and *Family Circle*. Soon after, *Woman's Day* reported that they would, in fact, like to add a nurse to their health advisory board.

Woman's Day staff chose Margaret McLean Heitkemper, RN, PhD, FAAN, to fill the prestigious position.

"We are very pleased to have a nurse and Sigma Theta Tau member on the *Woman's Day* advisory board," says Chief Executive Officer Nancy Dickenson-Hazard, RN, MSN, FAAN. "It will provide readers with cutting-edge health information from the nursing perspective and afford an excellent

opportunity to showcase the best of nursing to the public."

Heitkemper is an adjunct professor in gastroenterology at the University of Washington School of Medicine and the John and Marguerite Corbally Endowed Professor for Public Service at the University of Washington. She is also director of the NIH/NINR-funded Center for Women's Health Research at the University of Washington.

"*Woman's Day* is committed to providing its 20 million readers with health information that is accurate, valuable and possibly even lifesaving,"



Margaret McLean Heitkemper, RN, PhD, FAAN

says Madonna Behen, Health Director at *Woman's Day*. "To fulfill that goal, we rely a great deal on the members of our health advisory board, a distinguished panel of experts in various fields of health and medicine. We've chosen to include a nurse on our board because of the significant impact that nurses are making on women's health all

across this country. Dr. Heitkemper has clearly distinguished herself as a leader in the field of nursing and women's health, and we're honored that she has agreed to become a member of our advisory board." ■

How are you dealing with "information overload"?

By Anne Hennessy

Keeping abreast of the enormous amount of health care information is a daunting task. Have you ever wished you could find an easy, time-saving way to keep up with new developments in your professional areas of interest? A new online service called "My Info Search" may be the answer.

Imagine having a trusted expert send you weekly developments reported in book and journal literature. Detailing only subject areas that you've selected, you wouldn't be burdened with information you're not interested in; it would take only a few minutes to review; and if you wanted more in-depth information, you could link to it instantly.

That's essentially what "My Info Search" is all about. The result of Sigma Theta Tau's long-standing partnership with Doody Publishing, a leading provider of health care information and review services, "My Info Search" is an Internet-based service available at Sigma Theta Tau's Web site.

Doody's Book Review Service®

Doody's Book Review Service® evaluates books and electronic products across a wide range of clinical specialty areas in nursing, pharmacy, basic science, medicine, allied health and other disciplines.

Information on approximately 3,500 book and software titles is collected each year from more than 250 of the world's leading publishers of professional-level health care publications. Expert reviews of about 2,500 of the titles are prepared each year.

An automatic filtering system sifts through literally thousands of books and electronic products each week to customize the information for your requirements. In addition, every book in the database (more than 70,000 titles in all) can be easily ordered online. A unique "price comparison" shopping feature allows you to compare prices and availability from a number of lead-



"My Info Search" provides a thorough, comprehensive reporting of new publications on chosen topics. Great membership service!"

—Karen Morin,
Sigma Theta Tau member

ing eBookstore vendors.

Online Literature Review

The other main branch of "My Info Search" is the Online Literature Review. Each week, the system searches 4,300 journals and approximately 8,000 new articles added to the Medline® database.

When you first visit the site, you construct an interest profile that automatically records the information you want to receive. It takes only minutes to set up, and it can be updated any time.

Based on the topics you select, a weekly e-mail bulletin gives a quick summary of the latest articles published in the pre-selected interest areas. From the bulletin, you can

link right to your personalized Web page to review concise abstracts of the articles and gain access to the full text, if available.

Online Literature Review offers other features including a core journal section that allows searching across a smaller list of key journals selected by Sigma Theta Tau.

Registering for the Service

If you haven't yet signed up for "My Info Search," take a few seconds to visit now. Just click on the "My Info Search" link at the Sigma Theta Tau home page, www.nursingsociety.org, and enter your e-mail address in the sign-in box. You can then enter the service, visit the book and journal databases and establish your personal profile.

All members receive free and unlimited access to Doody's Book Review Service®. The Online Literature Review is provided on a 60-day trial subscription basis. If members elect to continue a subscription to Online Literature Review after the trial period, they can do so at the special member rate of \$39.95 per year. ■

For questions or feedback regarding "My Info Search," please call Doody Publishing at 1.800.219.9500.

Collateral reviewers needed!

Are you a member of Sigma Theta Tau International?

Do you have an earned doctorate?

Have you completed at least one postdoctoral research activity involving submission of proposals for peer review for internal/external funding?

Are you looking to gain valuable experience in the grant review process?

If you answered yes to the above questions, then you should apply to become a Collateral Reviewer.

Reviewers assist the society's international research committee by critiquing research grant proposals and scientific abstracts within your area of expertise. You will concentrate on Sigma Theta Tau International's research grants program, including co-sponsored and corporate grants. Applications are invited from seasoned investigators, as well as those with research success in early post-doctoral years. Collateral reviewers are appointed for four-year terms with potential for reappointment.

For detailed application information, please visit the society's Web site: www.nursingsociety.org/research or e-mail research@stti.iupui.edu.

IMPROVING NURSING FROM PAGE 1

criteria were ambiguous or missing, course content was poorly defined, and program focus and graduate qualifications were often not mentioned. Several catalogs contained language difficult for even the educated nurse to understand. Many school and university catalogs were unappealing and confusing for a student choosing a career. As the nation faces a nursing shortage, this is critical information. It was clear to the investigators that a catalog rating system was needed.

Study focus shifts

The rating system developed was designed to illustrate to each school their catalog's ability to attract the best and the brightest to nursing. The rating tool examined prerequisites, admission criteria, course content and readability. The presence of a clearly defined outline, which stated the focus of the program, opportunities available and qualifications of graduates, was also included in the rating tool. The investigators rated each catalog separately on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 16 (highest) based on the tool and then calculated an averaged overall score for each catalog. The catalogs were then categorized, according to their overall score, as either poor (1-4), needs improvement (5-8), average (9-12) or best (13-16).

As expected, the majority of the catalogs fell into the average range. The breakdown of all 75 catalogs rated showed 10.6 percent (8 of 75) best, 54.6 percent (41 of 75) average, 30.6 percent (23 of 75) needs improvement and 4 percent (3 of 75) poor. The catalogs were not separated by two-year versus four-year programs, and only catalogs that had submitted complete information about their programs were included. Only one catalog was rated a perfect score. There were three catalogs rated in the poor category, each with a score of four.

The catalog that was rated highest by both investigators was from Samuel Merritt College in Oakland, California, and stood out among the rest as an example of promoting and marketing nursing as an excellent choice for the serious student. The opportunities for careers in nursing shown were diverse and detailed, and the characterization of nursing as a profession was clear. The students entering this program would know the expectations, program track and the qualifications of the graduates. This catalog was written to make the applicant look forward to a bright and promising future in nursing and was aimed at attracting young students interested in utilizing technology, as well as the returning student looking to be challenged.

The three catalogs receiving a rating of poor were lacking in basic information. They failed to provide potential

students with the necessary tools to apply for and seek the degree offered by the school. One school failed to explain their RN program in terms of qualifications and described it only as units needed to complete a degree (which degree was not specified), leaving the reader wondering what the course of study would offer in terms of future potential. In addition, the information was poorly organized. The student would not know, for example, what the track included, the amount of time spent in lab versus lecture and what the courses covered.

Other study findings

In addition to the information obtained by individual catalogs, the investigators were surprised at some overall findings. For instance, of the 75 catalogs submitted, 12 of the schools used a lottery system. A lottery system does not allow the highest academically qualified person to be selected first. A second finding concerned the readability of the catalogs. Even when a catalog met the basic information criteria and received an average rating, the readability of the catalog was poor. Some of the catalogs listed classes and course content as if written for experienced and educated nurses. For example, the use of nursing theories to describe the philosophy of the nursing program doesn't fit students who aren't yet acquainted with the models. In one catalog, the reader is left to decipher what it means to follow the Neuman System model in the study of medical surgical nursing. This does not communicate well to the student who is interested in nursing and trying to choose the best school to fit his or her needs.

In conclusion, we find that it would be difficult to use these catalogs as informative tools to attract and guide prospective students toward nursing. The academic catalogs do not truly give a perspective of what nursing is like, what the classes contain, nor a comparison of one campus to another. For the nursing managers who wanted the material for placement insight, they were also of little value.

All schools that provided material to the investigation received their score and a copy of the tool. Recommendations for improvement include putting students on the committee that prepares the catalog for production, enhancing readability and presentation, and including descriptive, accurate content. For further discussion about recommendations, please contact us via e-mail: Jennifer L. Hobbs at HobbsJRNBSN@aol.com or Melodie Daniels at Mbegnaud@aol.com. ■

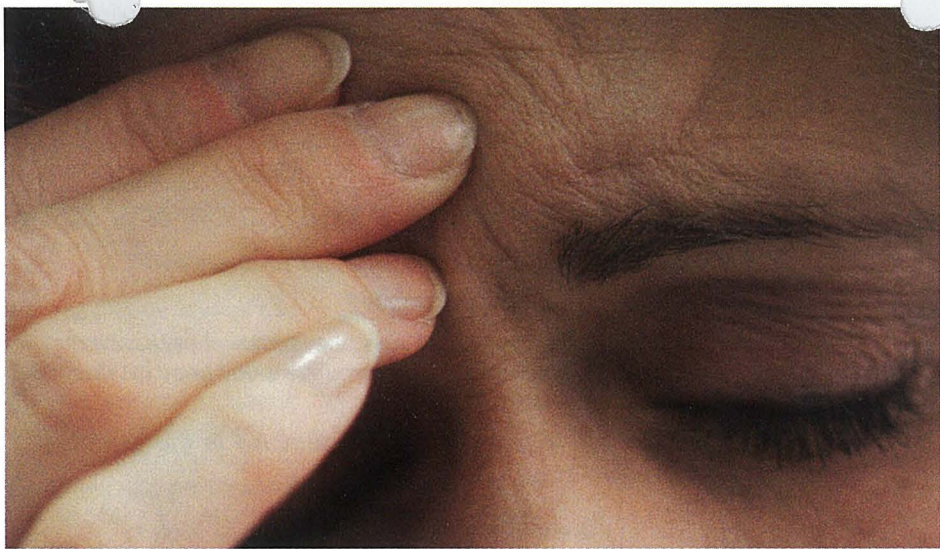
Jennifer L. Hobbs, RN, BSN, and Melodie Daniels, RN, BSN, are currently pursuing graduate degrees in nursing.

Call for abstracts

The Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International, and the Royal College of Nursing, Australia are proud to be co-sponsoring the 13th International Nursing Research Congress featuring The Adventures of Nursing Practice through Research: How Far Have We Come—Where to from Here?

Join us from July 24 to July 26, 2002, in Brisbane, Australia.

We are now accepting abstracts for paper, poster, workshop and symposium presentations on a variety of topics. Please visit our Web site, www.nursingsociety.org, for details and submission instructions. The deadline is October 28, 2001!



Looking for some stress relief?

NO MATTER WHERE YOU WORK, NO DOUBT YOU ENCOUNTER STRESSFUL SITUATIONS ON A DAILY BASIS. TO UNCOVER WHAT CAN BE DONE TO REDUCE THE EFFECT OF STRESS ON OUR LIVES, WE SPOKE WITH JOANNE HERMAN, RN, PHD, CSME, A CERTIFIED STRESS MANAGEMENT EDUCATOR AND AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA COLLEGE OF NURSING.

Q Why does there seem to be more stress now than ever before?

A We are all living increasingly fast-paced and complex lives. Culture and society are changing much faster than our bodies are able to adapt and evolve. Therefore, past methods of coping with stress are not effective when managing new challenges. As a consequence, we are seeing a dramatic increase in diseases related to stress.

Q If stress is due to our increasingly complex society, how can an individual do anything about it?

A Stress is a perceptual event—not an external one. Each of us perceives events, people, places and relationships in different ways, sometimes as stressful and sometimes not. The good news is that we have control over our own perceptions.

Q Is there anything that can be done to protect against stress?

A There are a number of stress inoculation behaviors that you can

adopt. Eating a healthy diet, doing aerobic physical activity on a regular basis, getting adequate sleep and limiting caffeine intake will all help you be stress-resistant. Obviously, all these things done together are more powerful than any one alone.

Q Are there any new or different ways to cope with stress today?

A The ways to manage stress are probably familiar to most people. The difference is that we need to use the techniques in a deliberate and systematic way rather than allowing them to happen randomly.

Q How can you control stress?

A There are a lot of strategies you can use. I divide them into four categories: avoidance, perception change, life-style management and relaxation techniques.

Q But how can you avoid stress?

A The most effective way to handle stress is to avoid it. Most people

can find at least one stressor that they can eliminate from their lives. This requires reflecting on your daily activities and interactions to determine which ones could be eliminated. Another way to avoid stress is to manage your worrying. I call this having a well-controlled “worry list.” You can have as many things as you want on your worry list, but only worry about a few of them at a time. Isn’t it true that most of the things you worry about never come true?

Q How can you use perceptions to manage stress?

A Since stress is a perceptual event, it is possible to change perceptions and eliminate the stress. This strategy is especially helpful when dealing with things you cannot control. Changing perceptions is much like learning any new skill. It takes practice. You identify the stressor and perceptions you have about it. Then, write a new healthier perception. Every time the event happens, practice saying the new perception. Over time, the new perception will replace the old.

Q Do you recommend the same stress relief techniques for retirees vs. baby boomers vs. 20-somethings?

A Age and occupation are not as important as humanness. By that I mean each person has a unique way of experiencing stress as well as dealing with it. The important thing is that individuals find strategies that match their

lifestyles and inclinations.

Q What does recent research reveal about stress and the importance of stress management?

A For many years, health care professionals have had anecdotal evidence that stress was one of the contributors to disease. Technological advances such as biofeedback instruments and monitoring devices have enabled researchers to measure the physiological response to stress. The development of psychoneuro-immunology knowledge has dramatically increased our understanding of the consequences of stressing on the mind/body. The newest area of research is beginning to identify the physiological connection between stress and disease. For example, the hormone homocysteine has been identified as the probable link between stress and coronary artery disease.

Q Where can I find more information about stress management?

A Any bookstore will have a large number of books about stress management along with relaxation tapes. An easy-to-read resource is *Stress Management for Dummies*. Community colleges, universities and health care systems often offer stress management programs. The Web has extensive information on stress management. Also, many employers have human resources, employee health or health promotion departments that provide classes and interventions to help with stress. ■

Dr. Herman's top 10 tips for reducing stress

1. Make time every day to do something you enjoy.
2. Cultivate a social support network and use it when you feel stressed.
3. Do an aerobic activity for 20-30 minutes at least four times a week.
4. Listen to your body. Be aware of when you are stressed and do something about it.
5. Learn new skills that might help you like basic communication, assertiveness training, conflict resolution, time management or how to deal with difficult people.
6. Learn a relaxation technique and use it regularly.
7. Don't be responsible for everything and everyone.
8. Be realistic about what you can do and only take on those activities most important to you.
9. Adopt a positive attitude toward life.
10. Find a person who handles stress well and ask for suggestions.

Choose the new Sigma Theta Tau credit card and support nursing research!
Help increase the society's research endowment fund by \$100,000 annually. Simply apply for and use the official Honor Society of Nursing credit card, issued by MBNA America Bank, N.A., and a percentage of your retail purchases will be earmarked for nursing research. Applications are available at www.nursingsociety.org/new.



what's
new
online

Find our ready-

to-use nursing

presentation for

elementary students

Get up-to-date

convention details

Join our Member

Community

Excellence articles are available at www.nursingsociety.org/publications/excellence.html. Don't miss these articles:

- “Are two heads better than one?”
- “Improving nursing's first impression”
- *Excellence in Nursing Education:*
- “Alzheimer's research provides guidance, hope to caregivers”
- “The ultimate nursing adventure”
- *Excellence in Clinical Practice:*
- “In the face of natural disaster”
- “How to bridge the generation gap”