From Competence to Competency: Our Evolving Mission and Direction

Late in the summer last year, The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing (JCEN) Editorial Advisory Board met to discuss various aspects of the journal. Our initial effort was directed at the journal’s mission statement. If you read our mission statement at the end of this Editorial and on the JCEN website (https://www.healio.com/nursing/journals/jcen/submit-an-article), you will see what we approved as our new direction. We identified six strategies to advance scholarship and innovation, which is our ultimate intent. These strategies are as follows.

**ADVOCATING FOR EXCELLENCE IN LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PROFESSION**

As you have seen during our 50th anniversary year, JCEN has provided an avenue for advocating about quality and accessibility to promote excellence in learning opportunities. The first statement means that we are committed to continuing that endeavor. We all are inundated with learning opportunities, and clearly some have greater value than others. While lifelong learning is the responsibility of the individual, those of us who provide ongoing developmental opportunities should be helpful by ensuring the quality of what we do and steering learners to resources we think might meet their needs. As an example, what would happen if all continuing education programs were accredited and nurses were assured of a common recognition of their ongoing developmental work? Although that is not likely to happen, it is a great goal to have to support the work we do.

**EVALUATING THE IMPACT THAT ISSUES IN HEALTH CARE, NURSING, AND EDUCATION HAVE ON THE FIELD**

As rapidly as change occurs today in any one of those fields—let alone all three—we shouldn’t be surprised that we feel overwhelmed some days. JCEN will serve as a place for authors to translate changes into the work we do. Those changes might be something that isn’t directly related to helping others learn or our own professional roles, but on reflection could set a new direction. If each of us did this work, we wouldn’t be able to manage programs, teach, or determine the impact of learning. However, if a few people provide their insights for us from a field we didn’t typically study, we would be able to maintain fresh, relevant programming and just-in-time learning relevant to what we need to do.

**SUPPORTING KNOWLEDGE-DERIVED SOLUTIONS TO COMPLEX PROBLEMS FACING HEALTH CARE PRACTICE, TEACHING, AND RESEARCH**

Once we know what is happening around us and we are clear about the context in which we are operating, we can derive solutions; the readership wants to know what worked for someone else. Their questions relate to: Will it work here? Can we afford to do this same work? Will we make a difference if we do something? Those questions exist if we start with our own thinking or if we are building on the work of others. The key consideration is that when we build on the knowledge of others, we are more likely to advance our work either in terms of quality or timeliness—or both.

**DISSEMINATING RESEARCH AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT FINDINGS WITH RIGOROUS EVALUATION TO TRANSFORM EDUCATION AND PRACTICE**

This element is the core of the work of JCEN. What is the latest that is happening that makes a difference in learn-
ing or how to deliver education in a timely and effective manner are always key concerns for those of us connected to JCEN. Our obligation to society and the profession of nursing is to be sure we are sharing the latest information about how people learn, what strategies are effective, and how best to implement our roles (especially considering, relatively speaking, that we are a limited number of specialists in the profession).

PRESENTING CRITICAL ANALYSES ON ISSUES THAT INFLUENCE INNOVATION, POLICY DEVELOPMENT, AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Whenever policy is developed, nurses in general and those of us involved in the process of continuing learning are affected. We need to consider what we need to share about the policy, what changes in practice might be necessary, how best to transmit information about the change, and what (if any) new standards need to be met. We simultaneously need to think about those innovative ideas that may have little (if any) evidence to back them but result in dynamic changes within an organization or the profession.

ANALYZING ISSUES RELATED TO CAREER DEVELOPMENT, COMPETENCY, AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Although this is the last of the identified ways in which JCEN will tackle the issues of the future, it in no way is the least relevant. In fact, we must be concerned not only with others—we need to consider how we develop our careers, achieve competency, and ensure lifelong learning.

We invite all our readers to consider how they can contribute to helping all of us help others in advancing the profession. We welcome your thoughts and your manuscripts!

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JOURNAL DESCRIPTION AND MISSION

The mission of The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing is to support continued career competency through continuing education, professional development, policy, and advocacy. The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing advances the body of knowledge, theory, and methods about continuing competency in nursing by:

• Advocating for excellence in learning opportunities for the profession.
• Evaluating the impact that issues in health care, nursing, and education have on the field.
• Supporting knowledge-derived solutions to complex problems facing health care practice, teaching, and research.
• Disseminating research and performance improvement findings with rigorous evaluation to transform education and practice.
• Presenting critical analyses on issues that influence innovation, policy development, and professional practice.
• Analyzing issues related to career development, competency, and lifelong learning.