Enhancing Care of Older Adults
From Schools of Nursing to Clinical Practice

It is indeed a great honor for me to be asked to write this editorial, especially since my clinical background is in maternal and child health. In my role as a dean, I now have a broad perspective that I did not have when I was a staff nurse or a faculty member. I have become acutely aware of the lack of focus on older adults in our schools of nursing and in our clinical worlds. It does not take long to realize that, in all areas where students are learning the skills of critical analysis and mastering the complexity of care, the overwhelming majority of their patients are 65 and older! Everyone needs to understand that the core business of our hospitals, home care agencies, and other clinical sites is the care of older adults.

With the support of the John A. Hartford Foundation and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, faculty members in schools of nursing have been able to build their geriatric capacity. Faculty who attended the Geriatric Nursing Education Consortium (GNEC) Faculty Development Institutes can now critically assess their nursing programs and develop evidence-based curricular changes. They can provide leadership for other faculty members who then can implement and evaluate the changes. Geriatric nursing touches all of us both personally and professionally.

What I have found so exciting about geriatric nursing is the following:
- The care is so multifaceted that geriatric nursing prepares new graduates to function in highly complex settings.
- It gets the attention of important individuals in the community, school, and workplace.
- Related topics, such as end-of-life care, palliative care, chronic disease, spirituality, and vulnerable populations, will emerge as grant funding opportunities.
- New and different partnerships between the academic and practice world will develop.

The importance of students graduating with competencies in aging cannot be emphasized enough. There are many challenges to achieving this, but we cannot let that stop us. With this special issue of the Journal of Gerontological Nursing, GNEC faculty members share cutting-edge educational strategies to use when teaching nursing students what they need to know to deliver care that is safe and appropriate for older adults. Many exemplars, educational tools, and resources included in this issue can also be used by nurses and preceptors to inform nursing practice.

Congratulations to the article authors, many of whom were also GNEC Institute faculty members, for transitioning GNEC content to an even broader audience with the publication of this issue. Special acknowledgement goes to the guest editor, Janice Palmer, PhD, RN, and guest associate editors, Catherine D’Amico, PhD, RN, and Sharon Wexler, PhD, RN, for their management and review of the articles for content, accuracy, and completeness.

Learning about the world of geriatric nursing has been an inspiration to me and has enriched my understanding of the curriculum that must unfold for the profession to be prepared for the needs of society in the 21st century. I have always been passionate about my career in nursing. Now, I just wish that I could start over and become an expert in geriatric nursing! I encourage each and every one of you reading this to become passionate ambassadors for the care of older adults.

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From the Guest Editor: I wish to recognize Laurie Dodge Wilson, RN, MSN, GNP-BC, ANP-BC (American Association of Colleges of Nursing) and Mathy Mezey, EdD, RN, FAAN (Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing at New York University College of Nursing) for their thoughtful reviews of these articles and participation in the decisions that went into putting together this special issue of the Journal of Gerontological Nursing. Their expertise in all things geriatrics and GNEC was essential to the thorough reviews of the manuscripts. Thanks also to Mr. William O’Connor (American Association of Colleges of Nursing) for his careful edits to the manuscripts. I hope the journal readers find the articles as useful as I do.

~ Janice L. Palmer, PhD, RN, Saint Louis University School of Nursing