

# Enfermería familiar y comunitaria en el ámbito internacional

## The International Family Nursing Association (IFNA): Fostering the Individual and Collective Development of Family Nurses

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As the first president of the International Family Nursing Association (IFNA), it is my pleasure to write this article about IFNA. First, I will provide a brief overview of the history of IFNA. Then, I will list the mission and specific aims of IFNA. Next, I will summarize our most important accomplishments to date and some of our plans for the future. Finally, I will list the seven top reasons why those of you who are not yet a member of IFNA should consider becoming a member of IFNA.

### History of IFNA

Initial discussions about starting some type of international family nursing association began long before IFNA became a reality in 2009. These initial discussions most likely began during, or soon after, the 1<sup>st</sup> International Family Nursing Conference (IFNC). As many of you know, the 1<sup>st</sup> IFNC was held in Calgary, Alberta, Canada in 1988 and it was hosted by Faculty of Nursing at the University of Calgary.

I had the pleasure of attending the 1<sup>st</sup> IFNC soon after I started my doctoral program. I am not exaggerating when I tell you that attending the 1<sup>st</sup> IFNC had a profound impact on my career. It truly was a life changing experience for me. Having the opportunity to listen to presentations by, as well as talk with, internationally recognized experts in family nursing was an amazing experience. I remember thinking repeatedly: these are the people I want to spend time with; these are the people who understand why I am so passionate about family health and well-being and the role of nurses in promoting these. Since that first IFNC, I have been fortunate enough to attend seven more IFNCs. While I always benefit from hearing the excellent presentations, I especially value the opportunity to renew and develop friendships with family nursing colleagues from around the world. I leave each conference with new ideas, new friendships, and new opportunities to collaborate.

Although initial discussions about starting some type of international family nursing association probably commenced at the 1<sup>st</sup> IFNC in 1988, it was not until 2005 during the 7<sup>th</sup> IFNC held in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada that serious consideration was given to what launching an association would entail. Four attendees at the conference (Drs. Janice M. Bell, Catherine (Kit) Chesla, Donna Miles Curry, and Kathleen Knafel) formed a Coordinating Committee to determine what would need to be done to transform the possibility of an international family nursing association into a reality.

In 2009 during the 9<sup>th</sup> IFNC in Reykjavik, Iceland, members of the Coordinating Committee held a planning meeting in which they presented conference attendees with an overview of preliminary plans for launching an international family nursing association. Fortunately for family nurses throughout the world, the materials developed by the Coordinating Committee (i.e., mission statement, specific aims, and bylaws) were so thoughtfully crafted that a vote taken to establish the International Family Nursing Association (IFNA) passed unanimously and IFNA was officially incorporated as an organization in 2009. Moreover, during the planning meeting, an announcement was made by Dr. Sandra K. Eggenberger and Dr. Sonja Meiers that the Glen Taylor Family Nursing Institute for Family and Society at Minnesota State University, Mankato had agreed to make a generous donation to IFNA. To say the least, this was a wonderful surprise, a surprise that helped to ensure that our newly established International Family Nursing Association (IFNA) would be launched successfully. We continue to be extremely grateful to the Glen Taylor Family Nursing Institute for Family and Society for their ongoing support.

### Mission and specific aims of IFNA

As stated in the Bylaws, the mission of IFNA is to foster the individual and collective development of nurses involved in the promotion of health care to families by providing a

unique international forum of shared responsibility for the advance of family nursing. The association offers opportunities for leadership, socialization, and collegial exchange related to all aspects of family nursing. Specific aims of the association are to:

- Promote the care of families in health and illness.
- Facilitate networking among family nurse researchers, educators and practitioners.
- Provide mechanisms for dissemination of information regarding family nursing research, education and practice.
- Advance family nursing research and foster the utilization of nursing research findings.
- Encourage socialization and preparation of students for the roles of family nurse researcher, family nurse advanced practitioner and family nurse educator.
- Promote the allocation of resources available for family nursing development.
- Comprise a professional source of evidence, information and advocacy in health policy, and health legislation to improve the care of families.

### Key IFNA accomplishments/plans for the future

One of the first key IFNA accomplishments was the election of an IFNA Board of Directors which includes leaders in family nursing from around the world. Our backgrounds and family interests reflect the diversity of family nursing. We meet on a monthly basis via conference calls. From the beginning, our discussions have been lively and enthusiastic as we discuss possibilities and future steps for IFNA. In 2010, we developed and approved the first IFNA strategic plan. This plan was based in large part on the results of an online needs assessment survey completed by over 75% of our membership.

The IFNA strategic plan for 2011-2013 includes our five main goals: (1) facilitate networking among family nurse researchers, educators and practitioners; (2) provide mechanisms for dissemination of information regarding family nursing research, education and practice; (3) ensure financial sustainability of IFNA as an organization; (4) advance family nursing research and foster the utilization of nursing research findings globally; and (5) develop learning and conference opportunities for IFNA. Also included in the strategic plan for 2011-2013 is a committee structure consisting of eight standing committees. So far, seven of these committees have been activated (i.e., Communications, Conference, Education, Membership, Nominating, Practice, and Research). We plan to activate the final committee, Resour-

ce Advancement, in the near future. For each committee, there is a committee chair and in most cases a committee co-chair. In addition, each committee includes a board member who serves as a liaison between the committee and the IFNA Board of Directors.

A second key IFNA accomplishment was the development of an IFNA website [www.internationalfamilynursing.org](http://www.internationalfamilynursing.org) in 2009. Our website is constantly being improved and expanded because we expect our website to serve as a key resource for IFNA members. At the present time the IFNA website includes: (1) general information about IFNA; (2) a brief biographical sketch of each IFNA Board of Director; (3) a list of IFNA committees and contact information for chairs, co-chairs, and board liaisons for each committee; (4) membership information; (5) a history of past international family nursing conferences, including information about the 11th International Family Nursing Conference which will be held June, 19-22, 2013 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and (6) links to information about the Journal of Family Nursing, family related conferences, learning opportunities (internships, externships etc), family organizations, and resources for family nursing practice and teaching. In the near future, a new version of the website will be launched; the new version will give IFNA members access to a wide variety of valuable resources, such as links to family measures, syllabi for family courses, opportunities for collaboration on research projects, and teaching tools for faculty interested in teaching family nursing content.

Currently, IFNA has 125 members representing 18 countries. While we are very pleased with the number of countries represented, we are eager to expand our membership. During the past month, members of the Communications Committee developed a list of the seven top reasons why nurses and other professionals involved in the promotion of health care to families should consider joining IFNA. As noted above, I have included this list at the end of the article. My hope is that after you read the list you will consider joining IFNA.

This summer many IFNA members were fortunate enough to travel to Kyoto, Japan for the 10<sup>th</sup> International Family Nursing Conference (IFNC10) hosted by the Japanese Association for Research in Family Nursing (JARFN). The theme of IFNC10 was *Making Family Nursing Visible-From Knowledge Building to Knowledge Translation*. As with past international family nursing conferences, IFNC10 was an awe-inspiring success. This was a very impressive accomplishment given the tragic events that occurred in the northern part of Japan in March 2011. Chairperson Michiko Moriyama and her colleagues demonstrated astounding courage and determination during the months preceding the conference, especially when it became apparent that due to the tragedy that had occurred in Japan, some individuals who had planned to attend the conference were no longer able to at-

tend. During the conference, Dr. Moriyama and her colleagues were incredibly attentive and caring as they strived to meet the needs of all conference attendees. Of the 1007 individuals who attended IFNC10, 718 were from Japan and 289 were from outside Japan. Thirty-four countries and regions were represented at IFNC10.

At the same time that the Japanese Association of Research in Family Nursing (JARFN) (<http://square.umin.ac.jp/jarfn/jarfn/index.html>) was hosting IFNC10, it was also hosting the 18<sup>th</sup> JARFN Conference. Chairperson for the 18<sup>th</sup> JARFN Conference, Dr. Naohiro Hohashi, worked closely with Dr. Moriyama and the JARFN Board of Directors to ensure that holding the two conferences simultaneously enhanced the opportunities for conference participants. Participants who registered for IFNC10 were automatically registered for the 18<sup>th</sup> JARFN Conference. According to Dr. Hohashi, who is also a member of the IFNA Board of Directors, the final attendance for the 18<sup>th</sup> JARFN conference was over 1500.

Members of the IFNA Conference Committee, chaired by Dr. Kathleen Knafl, are busy planning the 11<sup>th</sup> International Family Nursing Conference (IFNC11), which will be the first conference hosted by IFNA. The conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis in Minneapolis, Minnesota from July 19-23, 2013. The theme of IFNC11 is *Honoring the Past, Celebrating the Future*. This theme was chosen because we are well aware that our current efforts build on a strong foundation and rich heritage of accomplishments and progress toward incorporating a family lens into our scholarship, curricula, and practice. We want to honor our strong foundation and rich heritage, as well as celebrate what we can accomplish if we work together to achieve our ultimate goal of promoting the care of families in health and illness. Currently, the Conference Committee is recruiting country liaisons to disseminate conference information and involvement. If you are interested in becoming a country liaison, please contact Dr. Knafl at [kknafl@email.unc.edu](mailto:kknafl@email.unc.edu)

## Conclusion

To those of you who have already joined IFNA, I extend my sincere thanks. I have no doubt that our greatest resource is our membership. I and the other members of the IFNA Board of Directors are eager to hear how we can best meet your needs and we look forward to working with you to achieve our shared goals. We ask that you encourage your family nursing colleagues to consider joining IFNA. Given that this is an international organization and we want to use our financial resources wisely, we use emails and email messaging (via Constant Contact) to disseminate informa-

tion about our organization. In addition, we use an online service, SurveyMonkey, to collect valuable information from our members. For example, three of our committees (i.e., Education, Practice and Research) have already conducted surveys of the membership using SurveyMonkey. Because of this, we now have a much clearer idea of concerns, needs, and priorities of our membership. As IFNA grows, we anticipate ongoing surveys to meet the needs of our expanding membership.

For those of you who have not yet joined IFNA, I encourage you to do so. Information on joining IFNA can be found on the IFNA website ([www.internationalfamilynursing.org](http://www.internationalfamilynursing.org)). IFNA offers a discounted rate to members in developing economic countries based on the World Bank Classifications. In addition there are two other membership options, 3 year membership and membership as a sustaining member. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact Debbie Zaparoni, at the administrative office for IFNA [debbie@internationalfamilynursing.org](mailto:debbie@internationalfamilynursing.org). You may also contact me directly at [vanriper@email.unc.edu](mailto:vanriper@email.unc.edu). I look forward to getting to know you. My hope is that during the next two years of my presidency I will have the pleasure of meeting many of you in person.

## Top seven reasons for joining IFNA

1. IFNA is a global community of nurse scholars and practitioners who care about the health and healing of families.
2. IFNA members are dedicated to the creation and exchange of NEW theory, research, practice, education and policy about families and the nursing of families.
3. IFNA members have unprecedented opportunities for collaboration with colleagues around the world who share a passion for family nursing research, practice, education and theory.
4. Social networking opportunities through the IFNA website and Twitter provide members with an opportunity to communicate directly with one another, share gifts and resources, and learn from each other.
5. IFNA members have opportunities for leadership and mentoring in family nursing.
6. Bi-annual international meetings provide opportunities for face-to-face networking and sharing new knowledge (IFNC11, June 19-22, 2013, Minneapolis, Minnesota)
7. New learning modalities such as webinars will allow members to access expertise and consultation in family nursing research, practice and education.