

## EDITORIAL

### Nursing Education, Research and Practice: Lessons Learned over Decades

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For today's and future nursing professionals, it is important to know, understand and apply the theory of nursing into clinical practice. Furthermore, the historical roots of nursing development lay the foundation for future success.

Our editorial is intended to review the 30 years of activities of the Faculty of Nursing of the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LSMU), which started nursing studies in higher education in 1990. The first Faculty of Nursing in Lithuania at a higher education institution was established in 1992 at LSMU and has come a long way during thirty years.

The Bachelor of Nursing program started with a group of 14 students when we currently have five times as many. Education opportunities for nurses are constantly expanding: a master's program in Nursing Leadership is being offered for future leaders in the healthcare system who will be able to meet the challenges in the healthcare system. The clinical leadership of nurses is also not forgotten. LSMU in cooperation with New York University is the first to start developing advanced practice nurses that will be able to meet the changing global population needs and consumer expectations. Over this time, there has been a growing demand for advanced nursing practice globally. Without the nursing profession, millions of people around the world will not be able to access quality, safe and affordable healthcare services. As nurses are the largest group of healthcare workers providing most of the care, particularly in the primary care setting, it is not surprising that the nursing workforce investment can yield a significant improvement in patient outcomes.

European strategic directions for strengthening nursing and midwifery towards Health 2020 goals have identified *scaling up and transforming education and training* as one of its priority objectives. Hence the initial education of nurses and midwives must be standardized at a degree level to get the best outcomes for patients and populations, and develop education and regulation that enables and ensures

that nurses' and midwives' core competencies are in line with the basic principles of Health 2020 and strengthen continuing professional development and career development.

LSMU Nursing programs, both bachelor's and master's, meet international standards, the requirements of the EU directive, and rank first in the country's nursing program rankings.

The first and still the only PhD program in Nursing has been implemented in 1999 at LSMU and corresponds to and completes the Bologna process. Lithuania has more than 40 nurses who have defended doctoral dissertations, who serve as researchers, teachers and shape the evidence-based nursing practice.

In its assessment of nursing science, the Government Strategic Analysis Center indicates: "The LSMU Nursing has a strong national position and well visible international partnership in the nursing education area and plays an important role in national healthcare policymaking. The Unit holds the only available nursing PhD research program in Lithuania and encourages young students to choose a research career. Its involvement as a WHO collaborating Centre for Nursing demonstrates the quality and innovative clinical care provided by the Unit. A peer-reviewed journal published by the unit (NERP-Nursing, Education, Research and Practice) is an excellent initiative and contributes to the dissemination of the Unit's research activities."

Clinical practice plays a very important part in education, research and practice. To date, clinical practice places have been developed throughout Lithuania with the implementation of the concept of mentorship. State of the Nursing World Report indicates that nurses play a crucial role in health promotion, health literacy, and the management of non-communicable diseases. With the right knowledge, skills, opportunities, and financial support, they are uniquely placed to act as effective practitioners, health coaches, spokespersons, and knowledge brokers for patients and families throughout the life course.

Our main challenge is to bridge the gap between science and clinical practice. To overcome this, a Nursing Clinic (previously – Nursing and Care Department) was established in 2021 with the mission

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to implement the nursing practice in Lithuanian healthcare institutions based on scientific evidence.

So what lessons have we learned from the demanding, although very interesting, inspiring, and rewarding path of nursing education, research, and practice?

First, we must be curious. Second, we must persevere with our goals, which may seem unachievable at first. And third and most important is to be good ambassadors of our profession and very much in love with people who need our help. We care!

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