

**Border, boundaries and political context in nursing and health care history: CAHN/ACHN
International Nursing History Conference**

2008 Conference Report

The CAHN/ACHN International conference brought together a large group of national and international scholars and people interested in the history of nursing. There were approximately 120 attendees from over a dozen countries. Among them were many national and international students and about 15 of the conference presentations were student papers. In total, there were over 60 presentations, including two Hannah Lecturers, Catherine Choy and Katrin Schultheiss, as well as four theme sessions and an Editor's Forum with invited speakers. It was truly a fabulous event and an exciting conference to mark the 20th anniversary of the Association.

A conference of this magnitude and success is the outcome of the enthusiasm, expertise and work of many people interested in creating a forum for sharing scholarship in the history of nursing. The program committee, chaired by Geertje Boschma, and the organizing committee, co-chaired by Carol Helmstadter and Judith Young, did a superb job of bringing everything together, from the overall conception of themes that prompted scholarly discussion through to ensuring we would be comfortable in the Toronto summer. We also were grateful for the support of Sioban Nelson and the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Toronto where the conference was held. Because of the funding from the Associated Medical Services, we were able to have seventeen invited speakers from six different countries – Australia, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, the U.S.A. and Canada, and student presenters from nine countries – Australia, Israel, Austria, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, the U. K., the U. S. A. and Canada. The result was a stimulating variety of perspectives and an excellent level of scholarship. Every presentation was followed by an interesting and lively discussion. More than half the registrants came from foreign countries including Colombia, Denmark, Ireland and Spain as well as the countries mentioned above. There was ample opportunity for networking and new scholarly contacts. CAHN/ACHN is grateful to AMS for their award of a Hannah Conference Grant and national and international travel support for students in support of the international conference. As well, we thank all of the additional sponsors for their support of this event; the Faculty of Nursing, University of Toronto; the Schools of Nursing at Ryerson University, Humber Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning, University of British Columbia; the School of Women's Studies, York University; the Allemang Centre for the History of Nursing and the AMS Nursing History Research Unit, University of Ottawa.

Hannah Lecturers

Catherine Choy, Associate Professor, Department of Ethnic Studies and Coordinator, Asian American Studies Program, University of California, Berkeley, provided the opening Hannah Lecture “***Nurses on the Move: Migration in Nursing and Health Care History.***” Choy highlighted the interplay of the migration of Philippine nurses to North America and government policies, such as migration from the Philippines being framed as a patriotic act. Her presentation opened up discussion on themes that recurred throughout the conference; international nursing; concepts of health care geography, gender and power.

Abstract:

In the new millennium, nurses and other health care workers are on the move. Their patterns of international migration are uneven with nurses from developing countries such as the Philippines migrating to work in highly developed nations such as the United States, suggesting that the concept of “brain drain” persists in the twenty-first century. For example, in June 2005, Jaime Tan of the Philippine National Institute of Health, Fernando Sanchez of the Association of Philippine Medical Colleges, and Virginia Balanon of the Philippine Health Social Science Association produced a paper featuring “10 Strategic Solutions for Action by Filipino Leaders” in an effort to combat “the brain drain phenomenon and its implications for health.” The paper was in large part a response to the recent publicity about Filipino doctors taking accelerated nursing courses in the Philippines in order to work abroad. The Philippine example is not an isolated one. Although it continues to be the world’s leading exporter of nurses, new research shows that other countries—Korea, India, Jamaica, and Ghana—have started to play a greater role in this phenomenon. This lecture poses the questions: What if we placed migration at the center of nursing and health care history? How would such a history illuminate the current discourses of nurses and health care workers in migration studies?

Katrin Schultheiss, Associate Professor, History Department, Gender and Women's Studies Program, University of Illinois at Chicago, provided the closing Hannah Lecture “***Religion, Citizenship, and the Transformation of the Nursing Profession in France.***” Schultheiss presented a view of the secularization of nursing in relation to political and gender discourses.

Abstract:

In the four decades surrounding the turn of the 20th century, hospital nursing in France underwent a process of professionalization grounded in the development of formal training programs and professional performance standards. Accompanying this move was a politically driven effort to replace the religious nursing orders that had traditionally provided care in most of the nation's hospitals with secular women who, many political leaders argued, were more incline to embrace modern republican and scientific values. In this talk, I explore the problematic nature of this transition: Why did the secularization of nursing encounter so much resistance even in ostensibly non-pious regions of the country? How did

religious nursing orders adapt to the new secular political landscape? How did ideas about women's proper role in society affect campaigns to secularize and professionalize nursing?

Theme Sessions

1. Political Context of Health Care

Three excellent papers were given, looking at nursing in Australian nursing in the mid-twentieth century, Germany in the 1930s and the United States in the early twentieth century. Schweikardt's paper analysed the creation of the National Socialist Sisterhood and its role in the National Socialist government as well as the roles of the community nurses in this Sisterhood.

2. The History of Northern and Circumpolar Nursing

This session provided the first opportunity to benefit from the CAHN/ACHN Vera Roberts Fund which supports research into the history of northern and outpost nursing. Joyce MacQueen provided a brief biography of Vera Roberts at the outset of the session.

3. Missionary Nursing and Religious Sisterhoods in International Context

This session offered perspectives on religious sisterhoods and the emergence of secular nursing in Switzerland, France and Quebec.

4. Complexities of Place, Power and Difference in the History of Psychiatry

5. Reflections on International Nursing and Health Care History Scholarship from an Editor's point of view

A panel of editors from the Nursing History Review, Canadian Bulletin of Medical History and Nursing Inquiry provided a spectrum of comments from pragmatic recommendations for manuscript submission, to the process of peer review in small scholarship communities such as history of nursing, to changes in the publishing industry such as the use of web-based, database-driven peer review and online submission of manuscripts ("Manuscript Central") for scholarly publishers. As well there was a stimulating discussion on differences in scholarship traditions in different countries and how these differences are taken up by various editors.

Concurrent Sessions

The concurrent sessions offered a range of scholarship with presentations on the history of nursing in specialty areas, such as district nursing and geriatric nursing in Ireland and England,

and many papers focus on the history of religious nursing. It was difficult to select from the numerous excellent choices.

Overall, this conference was an outstanding success with an impressive level of scholarship and range of ideas deepening our understanding of nursing history in multiple national contexts as well as linking nursing history to other fields of historical inquiry.

Next meetings

The 2009 CAHN/ACHN conference will be held jointly with the Canadian Society for the History of Medicine at the Congress of Humanities and Social Sciences at Carlton University in Ottawa. And next international nursing history conferences will be in London in 2010 and in Denmark in 2012. We hope to see many of you there.