



## EDITORIAL

Nurses may write in the loftiest terms about the care of patients while knowing that they often fail to care for each other. What is it that often makes them compassionate and endlessly kind with patients while at the same time inconsiderate and sometimes cruel with fellow nurses? The first article in this issue brings to light the topic of workplace bullying ('harassment' or 'mobbing') among nursing faculty members. The term 'mobbing' is also widely known in ornithology, where it is applied to the 'harassment directed at predators by potential prey'.<sup>1</sup> Among people it is typically shown by those in superior or peer positions harassing colleagues because they may be potential rivals or for other reasons. There may be psychological or sociological explanations for the phenomenon, but in the end it is an ethical question of fear, personal insecurity, and non-communication. It is not surprising that an analysis of most problems in health care, industry and commerce point to lack of, or poor, communication. No doubt, readers will have heard this endless times. Mobbing often results from a lack of self-awareness and a lack of support in difficult situations. In terms of ethics, this means that reflection, self-understanding, honesty and integrity are prerequisites, and that accountability is the working out of these elements in society. When a person has a complaint, of whatever type, it needs to be heard, taken seriously, and acted upon appropriately, be this on a personal, departmental or international level. It is therefore not surprising that most of the articles in this issue are in one way or another concerned with how we talk to each other, be this patients, colleagues or employers.

Dilek Yildirim conducted a large study of nursing faculty members in Turkey to elicit the various aspects of bullying behaviour among nursing colleagues. This article should by rights carry a 'health warning', as it exposes the negative side of nursing in a remarkable way. One wonders to what extent taking part in the survey described was cathartic for the participants and may have resulted in actions to silence the bullies. Perhaps more surveys of such aspects of the dark side of nursing are needed to understand the profession better. The 'Comment' by Helen Allan on this survey highlights how widespread the practice is, not just in Turkey, where the original work was done.

A suggestion for dealing with the anger, gossip and use of power in unkind and unjust ways that permeate nursing is offered by Karen Rich, who suggests that insights from Buddhism may help nurses to live more harmoniously with each other.

Nurses and physicians have traditionally been rivals, but Janet Storch and Nuala Kenny argue that, when they work together, this is not only more practical and enjoyable but results in better satisfaction for themselves and patients.

Susan Yarbrough and Linda Klotz have devised an educational tool for nurses to learn to deal with culturally difficult or sensitive issues. An important aspect of this demands discussion in groups, helping all concerned to reflect on their attitudes and values in challenging situations.

Sheila Shaibu reports on research she carried out among the Batswana people in Botswana. She describes graphically some situations where the traditional understanding of consent and confidentiality is stretched, but how she herself managed to retain her integrity as a researcher straddling two cultures.

The topic of 'the difficult patient' is examined and given new understanding by Marilyn Macdonald. Rather than blaming either the patient or oneself, this author looks at social and environmental issues that influence the behaviour of patients and nurses.

When nurses check at the end of a shift that they have done everything possible in every situation, they feel satisfied. Compassion plays a large role in this sense of satisfaction, but so does professional responsibility. Kirsti Torjuul and her co-authors describe practices among nurses working in surgical care.

On a mental health theme, Brodie Paterson and Joy Duxbury examine the many aspects of violence and restraint management used in psychiatric care, especially from the point of view of the validity of restraint.

Also researching in the field of mental health are Fredricka Gilje and Anne-Grethe Talseth, who describe how nurses' sense of self and being 'at home' in the self is an important element in their relationship with patients who have attempted suicide.

Ethics is always concerned about the good in society, and the authors of these articles show that this depends on a kind of conversation with oneself through reflection and maintaining integrity, and outwardly in the kind of relationship with the people who surround one through an accountability that is concerned with the good of all, above and beyond defending one's personal interests.

Some of the spirit of this is evident in the two people who have received the Human Rights and Nursing Awards 2007, given by the ICNE on 19 June at a ceremony at the University of Surrey. The citations are in this issue and make for inspirational reading.

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## **Reference**

- <sup>1</sup> Schwarz C ed. *The Chambers dictionary*. Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap, 1993: 1077.