

1. BACKGROUND

Between 1993 and 1995 the European Health Committee organised three meetings composed by a group of experts. The objective of these meetings was to analyse the importance and relevance of Nursing Research (NR), to define research priorities and to analyse the elements which might constitute a national strategy for the development of NR. The final document with the recommendations for the development of NR¹, was presented by the Council of Ministers to the Member States of the European Union and was signed by the 558th European Council of Ministers. From that moment, the Member States were informed about the importance of establishing a strategy involving the creation of a structure and a solid and stable organization for the development of Nursing Research.

In 1999, the Institute of Health Carlos III organised with European funding a new meeting in Salamanca, with the title "Building a European Nursing Research Strategy"². This was the first Euroconference in relation with Nursing Research. 14 countries attended this Euroconference and its aim was to establish recommendations for each of the subjects proposed (structure and organization, integration into practice, training, financing and priorities) and to achieve a consensus of all participants.

2. EXPERTS MEETING SEPTEMBER 2003

According to the results of this proposal, and bearing in mind the new instruments developed for the 6th Framework Program and the creation of a European Research Space, the Deputy Director General of Health Research considered essential to organise a meeting of European Experts in Nursing Research in 2003.

This meeting was an effort to join the different groups of Nursing Research existing in Europe, as well as the different research programs in order to have the possibility of applying for European funding which improves the situation of nursing research at an international level, having an effect in the improvement of cares and needs demanded by the European society.

The Spanish Ministry of Science and Technology awarded the Institute of Health Carlos III with funding for the implementation of this meeting (ref: SAF2002-11366-E).

The aim of this experts meeting was to know the situation of Nursing Research in the different European Union States, in order to relate the Nursing Research Networks and groups existing in those countries, with the priorities established in the 6th Framework Program. Following to this meeting, we have written this document where European research groups are presented, including their data and interests so they can be contacted by other European groups. The countries attending the meeting were: Denmark, United Kingdom, Scotland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden.

Members of European Nursing Research Institutions, as the Workgroup European Nursing Research (WENR) and the RCN Research and Development Co-ordinating Centre, also attended the Meeting and are interested in collaborating with us.

Finally, some people from Australia (University of Melbourne), Scotland and Spain, attended the Meeting as observers.

2.1. Presentation of Nursing Research in each country

¹ Full text on <http://cm.coe.int/ta/rec/1996/96r1.html>.

² Full text on www.isciii.es

The meeting started on Thursday 18th of September 2003. On this day, and in the morning of Friday 19th, experts presented a brief report of the situation of Nursing Research in their respective countries. The summary of this reports about Nursing Research in Europe is presented below:

Denmark

There is no long tradition for nursing research in Denmark. In 2003 there are about 30 nurses with a PhD-degree and an additional 30 nurses who are currently working with a PhD-project. The research units are small and disperse and there is not much collaboration between them. The research is going on at universities, university hospitals and a few nursing schools.

Germany

Since 1991 about 50 study programs in different kinds of universities have been implemented. The majority focuses on nursing administration and management and is situated in universities of applied sciences. Nursing research is conducted at 5 university institutes and as qualifying student work at all universities. A regular basic academic nursing education is still missing. The federal ministry of research will for the first time start funding clinical nursing research in 2004. Other research funding comes from the federal health ministry and the ministry for the elderly and the state ministries. There are also health insurances, some foundations or industrial companies funding nursing research, altogether still in a small amount. Bigger projects are missing especially those on the effectiveness of nursing. One of the big challenges is to prevent a broadening of the gap between nursing practice and research results.

Greece

Nursing Research activities in Greece are mostly conducted at an academic level. Universities and Technological Educational Institutes are responsible for developing, facilitating and disseminating research activities in nursing. Main research areas concern the improvement of patient care, health promotion and disease prevention, provision of care to specific group of patients/citizens, health education and communication. No formal dissemination or coordination mechanisms exist for the nursing research activities mentioned above. However, the academic community underlines the necessity of developing such supportive mechanisms.

Iceland

Education for nursing research is inherent in university education of nurses and midwives at Bachelors- and Masters level which is the general level of professional education. Doctoral education is mainly sought abroad. Nursing faculty has the duty to do research and to integrate research into teaching and practice. Structures are currently developed within health care institutions to promote research in practice. Nurse researchers compete for research grants nationally and internationally. Keywords for future development are collaboration, interdisciplinarity and internationality.

Ireland

Nursing and Midwifery research in the Republic of Ireland is being developed through a 5 year framework outlined in the Research Strategy for Nursing and Midwifery in Ireland, published by the Department of Health and Children in 2003. This contains 21 recommendations at national, institutional and professional levels. These recommendations cover the full spectrum of research activity from generation to utilisation. The Strategy can be viewed or downloaded from www.doh.ie

Malta

The Nursing Research Unit (NRU) started in October 2001, coordinated by Dr. Donia Baldacchino. Research in Malta is mainly oriented towards small scale studies for academic achievements of undergraduates and post-graduate nursing, midwifery and psychiatric students. The NRU aims at

educating on and conducting rigorous research, targeting the ultimate outcome of staff professional development and improving patient care. To achieve this aim, the NRU works at increasing nurses' awareness on the importance of rigorous studies; linking with other disciplines of the local and foreign interdisciplinary teams; conducting comparative studies, such as the current research on stress and self-esteem between Universities of Malta and Cardiff, UK. The NRU helps nurses to disseminate research findings in journals and conferences while supervising nursing staff in their academic achievement.

Poland

Nursing research in Poland started developing in 1970s when the first nurses graduated in Master's programs and then earned their doctoral degrees. In recent years there is a growing activity of nurse researchers. The studies cover a number of areas and different methodological approaches. However, there is a noticeable lack of recognized nursing scientific journals and networks of research units. Research is mostly financed by government. Our priorities for the future are: to intensify the studies, secure research funding and integrate research and practice.

Romania

Nursing Research in Rumania:

- is done especially by nursing students; they are co-ordinated by nurses or doctors who are in the same time teachers in nursing schools;
- research topics are suggested by practitioners or by students, the majority of topics are linked to the care in hospitals or they explore the needs of health education;
- since 1997 universities (Medicine) included nursing/care in their research plans;
- new organisations/institutions are involved progressively in promoting nursing research (CUDANR, OAMR, ANR)

Spain

According to the Spanish General Health Law 14/1986, the Institute Carlos III is the main unit of scientific and technical support for the Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs and for the Regional Health Services.

The Health Research Funding Agency (Fondo de Investigación Sanitaria - FIS) is part of the ISCIII. In Spain, FIS provides nationwide economic support for proposals for biomedical research projects. There are annual standard calls for proposals and specific calls. FIS also facilitates international academic and professional training, especially to young researchers through research fellowships. In the specific field of Nursing Research we have followed a trajectory from the strategy designed by the Health Ministry: In 1987, our agency started carrying out a series of initiatives to incorporate nurses into health research. These initiatives were:

1. To allow nurses to apply for grants as principal investigator to conduct research projects.
2. To incorporate nurses into the Technical Evaluation Commissions.
3. To fund a Working Group for Nursing Research. This group would produce a National Report about Nursing Research in Spain.

Since 1996, an organized Program of Nursing Research has been applied. This Program includes:

1. Research fellowships for nurses, which are addressed to different fields: training in Nursing Research methodology and Special Supports for promotion of Nursing Research in Hospitals and Primary Care Centres.
2. Nursing Research funding Projects. Between 1989 and 2003, near 700 nursing research projects (3.04% of the total) were submitted to FIS and 38.2% of these were funded. We should note that the number of nursing research projects submitted for funding has risen during the 1996-1998 period, from 55 projects in 1995 to 108 in 1998. As a strategy to coordinate nursing

researchers, we have submitted and coordinated several multi-site projects involving more than 150 nurses from 23 research units, two of which have been submitted to the European Union Funding Agencies.

As it can be seen, the majority of nursing research projects focuses on the clinical field. Most of nursing researchers come from Hospitals and Primary Care Centres.

Sweden

The Department of Nursing at Lund University is characterised by a dynamic environment, a committed teaching staff, research of great importance and a qualified support structure in the form of a library, a specialised staff for information and communication technology and other technical and administrative support.

Our activity is divided into three parts: teaching, research and postgraduate studies, along with the so-called third assignment, contact with society at large. The teaching takes place within our different undergraduate programmes.

Research and postgraduate studies mostly concern research focused on nursing.

Our ambition is that the teachers should have high competence, clinical as well as theoretical, and that the education should operate in close collaboration with healthcare and research.

It is important for us that the education should be governed by the students' requirements and that the activities are run in accordance with the students' charter of rights.

Our programmes are among the most popular in Sweden. There are many applicants and highly motivated students, which is very stimulating for those who work here.

Within the faculty there are several undergraduate programmes within the healthcare area, and it is our ambition to have as much cooperation as possible between these programmes. This will prepare our students for teamwork.

Care should be carried out according to science and proven experience, which requires active research and close cooperation between research and education at the undergraduate level. Our ambition is that there should be ongoing research within areas where healthcare needs are large and where ill-health means great strains for both the patients and their families. We provide postgraduate studies in nursing. Doctoral students work with clinical projects. During their education they take part in international courses, seminars and conferences.

UK

The UK is made up of four countries; England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The past few years have seen increased movement towards devolved government and the health service is one of the areas where each country has to a certain extent been able to develop its own strategy.

Each of the four UK countries has a chief nursing officer and each of the four countries has produced some kind of strategy document on nursing research (these can be found on the RCN Coordinating Centre web page (www.man.ac.uk/rcn))

Although much nursing research is 'self funded' nurses working towards masters degrees and doctorates, there is some external funding for both research projects and capacity building. There is a small amount of Government funding specifically for nursing and midwifery research and nurses can also bid for money from other government and charitable sources. Nurses are involved in priority setting exercises and all four countries have developed some priorities for nursing research.

In the UK research activity is mainly centred in Universities. Every 5 years or so the UK Higher Education Funding Councils make an assessment of the quality of research in all the academic disciplines. Because of its comparatively recent entry into Higher Education, nursing usually comes at the bottom of this league table but progress is being made in that increasing numbers of University Departments of nursing are getting higher scores and last year 4 departments received a grade of 5- the second highest grade.

Although the number of nurses with masters degrees and doctorates is increasing year on year, the total percentage of the nursing workforce with these qualifications is still very small. Recently the UK Council for Graduate Education in the UK called for an increase in research training for nurses and an increase in the funding available for research. The council stated that high quality research

is an essential element for improvements in the care and treatment of patients. Therefore research education can no longer be seen as an optional extra for all health professionals

Work Group of European Nurse Researchers (WENR)

In 2001 WENR published a Position Paper on Nursing Research in Europe [<http://www.wenr.org/>] which presented an overview of its activities and for the first time specified its research priorities:

- 1 Clinical outcomes should reflect the burden of disease
- 2 Nursing research should demonstrate multi-disciplinary working between all health and social professionals
- 3 Nursing research should acknowledge, use and generate evidence-based nursing practice.

WENR occupies a unique position in European Nursing Research as it is funded by 25 national nursing associations, meets annually and has its work organised through an elected Steering Group with a Secretariat in Stockholm. WENR has recently completed a feasibility study funded by the Northern Nurses' Federation on developing a EU 6th Framework application. As a result of that project, WENR has declared that it would be willing to be involved in EU funding opportunities in order to build European nursing research capacity and develop nursing research infrastructure.

2.2. Creation of groups

Also, there were two presentations about the priorities of the 6th Framework Program and ERA-NET Scheme, given by two members of the Spanish Ministry of Science and Technology who attended the meeting in order to give this kind of information.

The presentations and the discussions that followed these presentations, as well as the questions and comments referred to the VI FW were moderated by a facilitator, foreign to Nursing Research. The presence of this person allowed us to fulfil the schedule and avoided that experts have a brush between them.

The day was completed with the analysis of the possible subjects for integrated projects and excellence networks of the attending countries, and the possible groups able to ask for integrated projects and excellence networks for the next VI Framework calls. Each country told its areas of interest for these three kinds of actions:

1. Specific support actions

Denmark: Elderly, Mental Health, Primary Health Care
Greece: Elderly and quality of care
Malta: Palliative care, aids, chronic illness
Spain: Genetics (social impact)
UK: Genetics

2. Networks of excellence

Germany: Elderly, chronic illness
Iceland: Public health, research education
Netherlands: Pressure ulcers, chronic illness, elderly, multidisciplinary classification system, strategies for implementation research
Poland: Elderly, chronic illness, vascular diseases
Portugal: Lived experiences nurses, patients and students
Romania: Primary care health, health education
Spain: Elderly
Sweden: End of life, palliative care

UK: elderly, mental health, chronic illness?

3. ERANET

Greece
Ireland
Netherlands
Romania
Spain
UK (Scotland, England)

3. WORKING GROUPS

All the experts agree to form three working groups: two working groups were created in the fields of Genetics and Aging, and another group was created for applying to the section ERANET of the 6th Framework Program. All participants were included in one of these groups according to their experience and to the health policies of their own country. Each of these groups works separately and is represented by a leader who coordinates the members with the aim of presenting a project per group to the following call of the 6th Framework Program.

To establish the guidelines for a Collaborative Partnership in each of the groups formed, we followed the "Sigma Theta Tau International Guidelines for International Collaborative Research"³ developed by the International Research Committee in 2003.

On the third and last day, the 20th of September, the three groups worked individually from 9 until 11:30, the conclusions for each workgroup were:

1. Group of Genetics:

Leader: UK
Group: Iceland, Malta, Sweden, Scotland and Spain
Contact person:

This group is working on a Specific Support Action (SSA) for exploring the health, social and ethical implications for adults of developments in genomic knowledge on major diseases for the education and practice of healthcare professionals; and for contributing to future networks of excellence in genetics.

The participants in this SSA are experts in genetics, ethicists, users or representatives of user groups, healthcare educators, practitioners and researchers.

The main goal is that experts could tell the others what is going on with genetics and try to build an experts network in order to be ready for the next call.

The major diseases focused are coronary disease, diabetes and musculoskeletal disease.

2. Group of Elderly:

Leader: Ireland
Group: Denmark, Germany, Greece, France, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and WENR
Contact person:

This group is working on the following subject in order to submit a proposal in the future:

³ Full text on : http://www.nursingsociety.org/research/guidelines_ICR.rtf

- where the elderly live; cross-cultural issues;
- mentally handicap
- healthy ageing
- transfer of palliative care concepts to care of the elderly
- require to prioritise themes
- as further elaboration on cross-cultural: immigration effects, war-displaced returnees, is this a smart, political application? Needs to be related to SSA needs

3. ERA-NET:

Leader: Spain

Group: Netherlands, Ireland, Scotland and the RCN Research and Development Co-ordinating Centre

Contact person:

This is the most advanced and important initiative arised from the Meeting, as the group has presented an ERA-NET proposal for a Specific Support Action on March 2nd 2004.

The aim of this SSA is to bring together a consortium of potential collaborators to create a Nursing Working Group (NWG) from national and regional nursing and health research development agencies. This NWG pretends to identify links and build networks for capacity and capability building, programme development and support. This will lead to the development of an application in the call of October 4th 2005 for a Coordinated Action to establish a European Platform of Nursing Research (EPNR). Such a platform will enable the ultimate vision of high quality international nursing research programmes across all Member States and will facilitate and stimulate participation from the candidate countries in a future Coordination Action.

The SSA will have for specific objectives:

1. To develop further the previous informal mapping of current research programmes and activities in terms of their gaps, overlaps and possible synergies, in order to identify potential areas for coordination of existing research programmes to which nurses contribute, or lead.
2. To identify "best-practice" in capacity and capability building strategies that will enable the development of networks of research programmes and infrastructure to which nurses contribute or lead.
3. To identify current research strengths that have the potential to lead to programme development and that can be exploited by developing linkages and networks of nurses and others that will add value to existing research activity.
4. To develop an application for a Coordinated Action, to be presented in the call of October 4th 2005 for establishing a European Platform of Nursing Research.

In developing this application we have identified an additional eligible potential partner, England, who has expressed an interest in collaborating as a CA partner for Objective 4.

4. FINAL COMMITMENTS

The establishment of a list of final commitments was the last part of the meeting, and it came after that each group resumes their conclusions of the work group.

The commitments achieved during the period after the Meeting were:

1. The organising institution (Institute of Health Carlos III) sent a letter to the higher policy makers in the field of nursing research of each country attending the meeting. This letter

summarised the objectives and results of the meeting, and encouraged these policy makers to support nursing research initiatives.

2. A common document was written to inform the Spanish Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs about our achievements and our aim of constituting a consolidated group for future initiatives in the field of Nursing Research.
3. All participants agreed to register themselves in the database of the European Commission in Brussels, so they could be called for being evaluators of nursing research projects. They agreed also to contact at least ten experts in genetics and aging in order to register them in the database.
4. Each one must try to find 10 experts in their own country, if possible, related to elderly and genetics and ask them to register themselves in the experts database. In order to know the number of experts registered, please send the list to Teresa Moreno.
5. Each participant contacted an expert in each field (genetics, aging) so all countries are represented in each group.
6. A letter was written to be sent by each participant to their country's coordinator of National Contact Point for the 6th Framework Program. The aim is that these coordinators inform the policy makers about the interest of this group in the European Research Policies.

5. NEXT STEPS

1. During this year the three groups will continue working on their correspondent projects by e-mail, and it is planned that all the experts meet at Seville, during the 8th Nursing Research Conference, with the aim of reviewing the final commitments and the work done by each group, and discussing about the following steps to take. We will prepare a four hours workshop dealing with the following subjects:
 - Level of fulfilment of the final commitments by each member of the group of experts.
 - Presentation of the work done by each working group during this year.
 - As by that time we will know if our ERA-NET proposal has been accepted, we will present this project to the other groups.
 - Presentation of a possible project for a Workshop on "Nursing and Genetics" to be held on 2005.
2. Our main objective is to obtain financing in order to continue working and collaborating on Nursing Research at an European level.
3. We will create a working place on the website of the Institute of Health Carlos III where the European Experts will be able to be in contact and to find news and information about Nursing Research in Europe.
4. After the Meeting at Seville, we will distribute an updated final report about the subjects treated and future projects.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like to have more information about us, you can visit our website (www.isciii.es/investen) or contact us in the following address:

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