

advances

university of nebraska medical center college of nursing spring 2006



Small World, **Big Ideas, Brilliant Nursing**



UNIVERSITY OF
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Medical Center

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SCOTTSBLUFF

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advances

UNMC College of Nursing

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Welcome to the pages of *advances* and to the stories that capture the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Nursing's busy year!

There is much news to relay and this issue of *Advances* only tours you through the highlights. For example, although the UNMC College of Nursing has long provided nursing students in Nebraska the opportunity to earn degrees via distance education, access to our nursing programs has never been greater than now, thanks to advances in technology from satellite feeds to high-speed Internet connection. Such advances not only allow Nebraska students access to our programs, they enable us to reach far beyond our own state borders. Nursing students across the United States earn master's and doctoral degrees from the UNMC College of Nursing at a distance. Students in other countries also benefit from our unique model of online learning. We have formed academic partnerships with universities in Jordan and India to help boost their nursing curriculum either through exchange of students and faculty or by providing access to our R.N. to B.S.N. program via the Internet. Through these collaborations the UNMC College of Nursing is now internationally known as a school that offers top quality health professions education. In this issue you will meet global students who chose UNMC College of Nursing.

You will also read how technology has impacted our research initiatives. For example, faculty from the UNMC College of Nursing and St. Paul's College in Lawrenceville, Va., are collaborating on a study to evaluate whether an Internet-based program will help African American women who live in rural areas improve their health.

While technology has enabled us to grow in new directions, we have also dedicated more resources to enrich the research-intensive environment of the College. Faculty research is a valued mission of the College that is encouraged and supported, as demonstrated by the new "research-intensive" faculty positions – designed for faculty with proven track records of externally funded studies and scholarly publications. These faculty are charged with dedicating themselves to success in their research programs and to providing research mentoring to other faculty and graduate students.

Advances is both the name of our publication and the term that captures our forward momentum in education, research, and service. Enjoy our news and let us hear from you!

Best to all,
Ginny

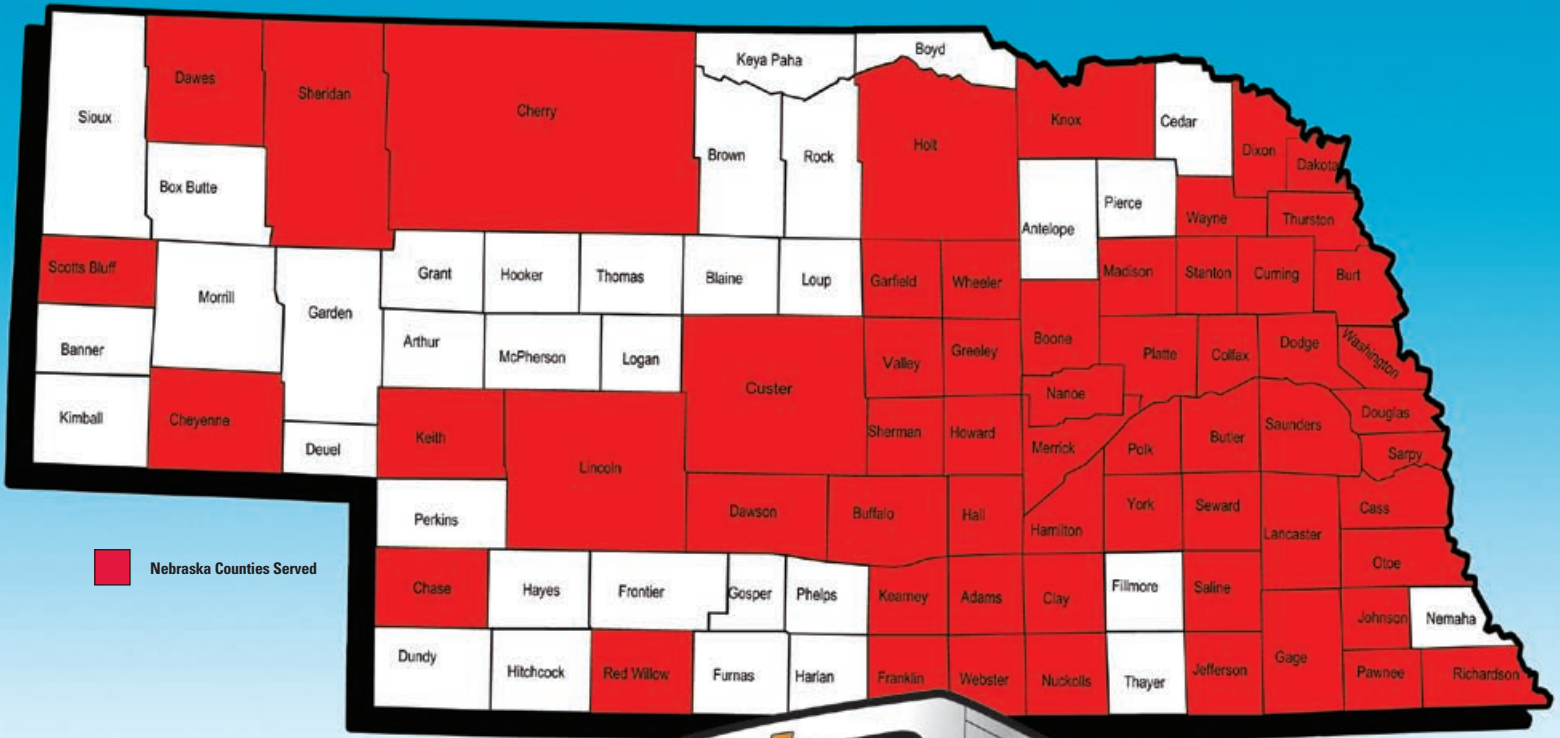


Virginia Selder

mobile nursing center

clinical practice on the move

Years in Existence: **14**
Miles Traveled: **72,000**
Nebraska Counties Served: **59**
Patients Seen: **27,973**



“Buenos Días,” Ana Lara-Ramirez says with a smile to three Hispanic men as they enter the Mobile Nursing Center on this cold February morning. The men smile at her and quietly sit down. Lara-Ramirez, a bilingual staff assistant, registers the clients who are served by the UNMC College of Nursing Cosmopolitan Mobile Nursing Center (MNC). “It is very rewarding work,” says Cathy Binstock, APRN and project manager of the MNC. “Especially seeing how you can make a difference in somebody’s life...like the time a nurse called 911 to report a heart attack. The person walked in with chest pains and hadn’t gone to see a doctor yet,” said Binstock. “We knew right away he needed help.”

Since its inception in 1992, the MNC has provided diabetes, cholesterol, breast and cancer screenings, taken blood

The MNC has recently been incorporated as a component of the Morehead Center for Nursing Practice, which is designed to centralize, integrate and support academic nursing practice. “The MNC not only provides a venue for serving disadvantaged and underserved people, it is also an opportunity for nursing students to sharpen their skills and learn about the complexities of disease prevention, health promotion, diverse and/or underserved populations,” said Binstock.

“The mobile nursing center has definitely served a valuable purpose,” said Linda Sather, Ed.D. R.N., who became the MNC director recently after former director Kathleen Barr, Ph.D., retired. “But we can do more. Why not partner with public health departments across the state who could benefit from the nursing services that we could provide?” With nursing divisions in Omaha, Lincoln, Kearney and



| Ana Lara-Ramirez records patient information. |



| Dr. Linda Sather with patient Ruby Agee. |



pressures and provided a variety of other services to more than 27,973 Nebraskans. To date, the Mobile Nursing Center has logged over 72,000 miles and served communities in 59 of the 93 Nebraska counties. It is housed in a 36-foot mobile unit donated by Cosmopolitan International, a non-profit civic service organization that also pays for gas for the unit and a driver.

“If not for a chance offer by the Cosmopolitan group, the Mobile Nursing Center would not be around today,” said Catherine Todero, Ph.D., R.N., founder and original director. Dr. Todero said the Cosmopolitan group first offered to support a scholarship for a nursing student, but she had bigger plans. “I asked them if their group had ever supported a mobile center before and it was Jim Sauer, president of the Cornbelt Federation of Cosmopolitan International, who took it to the national board and secured funding,” she said. Dr. Todero secured additional funding in the form of federal and state grants. “The six years of federal and state grants allowed us to hire an administrative assistant and nurse practitioner,” she said. The Nebraska Medical Center and the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) have both provided significant support in past years.

Scottsbluff, Dr. Sather said, the MNC could utilize students from each of the divisions to provide services under the auspices of the center. The MNC provides a wide array of experiences that students from other disciplines could utilize for their clinical learning. “We need to involve more undergraduate and graduate students from all of the UNMC Colleges, including the School of Allied Health, pharmacy, medicine, and public health,” Dr. Sather said. But all of this service costs money, said Dr. Sather, who is working on finding other funding sources and applying for more grants. A few ideas Dr. Sather proposes that will help continue to generate revenue and expand services include: developing more worksite health promotion packages, identifying school systems that lack nursing services and securing practice/service grants. “By pinpointing the needs of a specific county or employer we can expand the outreach of the MNC,” she said. ♦♦♦♦

Research: Crafting an Environment for Success



Dean Virginia Tilden, D.N.Sc.

The College of Nursing has long been a research-intensive environment where faculty research is valued, encouraged, and supported. Many faculty studies have burgeoned into impressive programs of investigation with significant extramural research funding. But ...

... to achieve its ambitious research agenda, the College has to do more to craft an environment for success. To that end, faculty with strong publication track records and funded pilot studies are encouraged to become "research-intensive," that is, dedicated to the pursuit of outside research grants and contracts.

For nursing science to achieve its full potential to improve the nation's health, we must consider faculty time as a precious resource. Typically, the faculty role integrates the missions of teaching, research, and service. This is called the comprehensive faculty role, and doing well in all missions can be daunting. Research-intensive faculty take on a dedicated faculty role that is dedicated to success in research and research training. Research-intensive faculty have time invested in them for this work, in return for their commitment of significant research productivity. While all of the missions of the College must be shouldered, missions can be balanced across the faculty as a whole rather than within each individual.

The College has been busy recruiting new research-intensive faculty. These are individuals with demonstrated success in the research mission who join the College ready and willing to dedicate significant amounts of time to the success of their research programs.

In this section, we are delighted to introduce you to three new research-intensive faculty, Dr. Karen Schumacher, Dr. Rita Snyder, and Dr. Connie Visovsky.



“What I am finding in my research is that we are doing a better job of identifying the information that family caregivers need.”

Dr. Karen Schumacher

Nursing science provides knowledge needed to teach the next generation of nurses and to insure that patients’ needs are met in the best possible ways in clinical settings,” says Karen Schumacher, Ph.D., R.N. “We’ve made great strides in nursing science in recent decades,” said Dr. Schumacher, an associate professor of nursing who holds a research-intensive faculty position at the UNMC College of Nursing. “Nursing science can inform policies about nursing practice and health care delivery.”

That is why the research-intensive faculty positions that Dean Virginia Tilden, D.N.Sc., has created at UNMC are so important, Dr. Schumacher said. “These positions the dean has created are very innovative and present tremendous opportunities for advancing nursing science at an even faster pace,” she said.

Since coming to UNMC in 2004 from the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing, where she taught community health nursing, Dr. Schumacher has immersed herself in her research by finalizing her prior RO1 study and laying the foundation for the next study. By virtue of her position, Dr. Schumacher is able to focus a large part of her time on developing a program of research and building a research team. “Having the time over the past year-and-a-half to focus on my research and develop multidisciplinary relationships, as well as put together a research team, has really propelled me forward with an extraordinary amount of momentum,” Dr. Schumacher said.

She is currently working on a study that looks at how family caregivers of people who have cancer develop the skills they need to provide care for their loved one at home and how that skill development influences the patients’ well-being. “Since cancer care is provided primarily on an outpatient basis, family caregivers need a tremendous range of skills these days,” Dr. Schumacher said. “The care can range from

procedures like giving injections or tube feedings to symptom management to providing optimal nutrition to providing emotional support.”

Family caregivers are also learning how to navigate the health care system, coordinate patient care and manage complex medication regimens. Many times, the family caregiver is the initial decision maker when an acute illness first presents itself at home, she said.

“What I am finding in my research is that we are doing a better job of identifying the information that family caregivers need,” Dr. Schumacher said. “But we are not doing as well with helping family members put that information into practice at home.”

For example, patients receiving cancer treatment may be prescribed a dozen medications for symptom management. Basic information about those medications is provided but the caregiver still has to develop the skills needed to set up and manage the medication regimen and use it effectively, she said.

In pain management, Dr. Schumacher said, caregivers might have several different medications on hand from which to choose and must be able to give the right medications at the right times in the right combination so that the pain is controlled. “That takes experience and new caregivers worry that they will give too much or too little,” she said.

Think about beginning nursing students and the uncertainty they feel when faced with complex patient care decisions for the first time, she said, and then apply that to a family caregiver who has to provide equally complex care, but it is to a loved one and without an instructor at their side. “It has been very moving to me to hear how family members learn to do things they never thought they could do and then tailor their care-giving to meet the needs of their loved one,” Dr. Schumacher said.



“Research has demonstrated that 78 percent of medication errors leading to ADEs are due to inadequate information management systems.”

Dr. Rita Snyder

The strong emphasis on research is what attracted Rita Snyder, Ph.D., R.N., CNAA, BC, to the UNMC College of Nursing. “I’ve been in academics for a number of years and at this stage of my career I want to focus on my research,” said Dr. Snyder, an associate professor of nursing. Her desire to spend more time conducting research became a reality when she accepted a research intensive faculty position with UNMC in July of 2005.

“With this position I spend the majority of my time conducting research, applying for new grants and writing papers,” said Dr. Snyder, who brought a \$1.3 million grant with her when she assumed her position.

Her three-year grant, which is funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), focuses on the impact of a Computerized Provider Order Entry (CPOE) system on Adverse Drug Event (ADE) outcomes in community hospitals. ADE’s are the most common type of iatrogenic injury occurring in hospitalized patients. Statistics from the AHRQ indicate that over 770,000 people are injured or die in hospitals each year from ADEs. Patients who experience ADEs are hospitalized 8 to 12 days longer and this results in an estimated annual cost of \$1.56 and 5.6 billion.

“Research has demonstrated that 78 percent of medication errors leading to ADEs are due to inadequate information management systems,” Dr. Snyder said. “But there is limited research on the impact of CPOE systems on medication safety in urban-based community hospitals where the greatest number of Americans receive care.”

The study, now in its third year, involves 17 clinical care units from two Sharp Healthcare hospitals in San Diego, California. The study aims to examine: 1) clinician perceptions of readiness for a CPOE system before it is implemented 2) clinician perceptions about CPOE

system usefulness and satisfaction with the system after it is implemented 3) the impact of the CPOE system on medication errors and 4) the influence of clinical unit contextual factors on CPOE system implementation processes and outcomes.

“It’s a very lengthy and complicated process to implement these complex systems in large health care settings,” said Dr. Snyder. “Improving hospital safety is a hot topic around the country and a significant number of the issues associated with safety involve information systems that are frequently inadequate and/or ineffective in their support of clinician decision making. Effective information technology can provide high quality health care data and information that, when combined with the knowledge of expert clinicians, provides a safer patient care environment.”

The Nebraska Medical Center is already benefiting from her research, she said. Through a collaboration with UNMC medication safety researchers and involvement in various hospital IT evaluation activities, Dr. Snyder said she is in the process of identifying how study variables, evaluation techniques and tools, and preliminary findings can potentially contribute to and strengthen Nebraska’s health care IT implementation, and IT research and evaluation efforts.

Dr. Snyder said she views her research role as all encompassing. Whether she is writing, participating on scientific review panels, reviewing manuscripts for journal publication, making presentations, working with students, teaching a class or collaborating with a colleague on a grant, she remains immersed in research.

“Our science drives all aspects of our professional practice,” she said, and “by linking it to all facets of my role, I am able to focus on research no matter what I am doing.”



"In the future, I plan to use a combination of nutrition, exercise and glycemic control to lessen the neurotoxic and myotoxic effects of chemotherapy."

Dr. Connie Visovsky

While trying to decide where she would like to continue her career in nursing science, Constance Visovsky, Ph.D., R.N., ACNP, heard about an exciting new position at the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Nursing.

The research intensive faculty position, which Dr. Visovsky now holds, is part of a program specifically designed for people interested in focusing on nursing research.

"It was the perfect fit for me," said Dr. Visovsky, who came to UNMC in September 2005 from Case Western Reserve University. When UNMC College of Nursing Associate Professor Ann Berger described the research intensive faculty position, I knew it was everything I wanted. I could focus on research but still teach and take part in clinical practice."

Her current research study investigates the efficacy and feasibility of a home-based resistance program for ameliorating neuromuscular fatigue and weakness in women undergoing chemotherapy for the treatment of breast cancer. The two-year study is funded by a grant from the National Cancer Institute.

Cancer treatment with chemotherapy can have many ill effects, including decreased energy level, muscle weakness, declines in functional status and alterations in body composition. Early detection methods and novel therapies have increased the life span of individuals living with cancer so that many more people are living with the effects of disease and treatment. Dr. Visovsky's study is unique in its use of a home-based, strength training approach and in the prospective timing of the exercise intervention to coincide with administration of chemotherapy.

According to Dr. Visovsky, there are few interventions

aimed at prevention of neuromuscular toxicities associated with cancer treatment. This primary prevention approach institutes measures to prevent neuromuscular declines during cancer treatment in an attempt to maintain or improve baseline physical functioning. "Research focused on the design and implementation of muscle strength training exercise for individuals receiving chemotherapy is a necessary step for clinicians to be able to prevent debilitating muscle weakness and atrophy in their patients, thus preserving physical function," states Dr. Visovsky. The proposed study will test the effectiveness of strength training exercises in preserving or improving muscle strength, maintaining or increasing lean body mass, improving quality of life, with ameliorating fatigue in individuals undergoing treatment with chemotherapy. In addition, the study will provide important data concerning the feasibility and acceptability of the resistance exercise program for both patients and clinicians.

An associate professor, Dr. Visovsky has also received funding from the UNMC College of Nursing and Eppley Cancer Center to further her research on the interaction of neurotoxic cancer treatments and comorbidity in older patients who have diabetes. "I am currently studying neurotoxicities that occur in patients who have both diabetes and cancer. In the future, I plan to use a combination of nutrition, exercise and glycemic control to lessen the neurotoxic and myotoxic effects of chemotherapy," Dr. Visovsky said.

Along with her research, Dr. Visovsky maintains a clinical practice in The Eppley Cancer Center as a nurse practitioner in the breast cancer clinic. She recently received an appointment as an associate professor, courtesy of the Neurological Sciences in the UNMC College of Medicine. ●●●●

New Mother's Network

Diane Brage Hudson, Ph.D., R.N. is studying the effectiveness of an Internet-based social support intervention that she designed to alleviate the psychological, parenting and health care difficulties experienced by single, low-income, African American mothers.

The New Mothers Network (NMN) is a six-month pilot study that began last fall with \$220,500 in funding from the National Institute of Nursing Research. "We recruited 42 participants, ranging in age from 16 to 21, who are in their third trimester of pregnancy," Dr. Hudson said. Dr. Hudson is an associate professor of nursing with the UNMC College of Nursing Lincoln Division. Co-investigators for the study include Christie Campbell-Grossman, PhD, RN, assistant professor Lincoln division, Martha Foxall, PhD, RN, FAAN, professor and chair of parent/child, administration, education and science department Omaha division and Rebecca Keating-Lefler RN, PhD, assistant professor Omaha division.

New mothers in the control group have access to the usual medical and nursing care and parenting information obtained in childbirth education classes in the hospital after their baby's birth. "Mothers assigned to the experimental group will access an electronic library where they can read information on maternal and infant health, as well as find out what community resources are available," Dr. Hudson said. "These mothers can e-mail the advanced practice nurse, who will also moderate chat groups for them. Mothers in the group will also be provided a small television and MSN TV2, a portable easy-to-use device that they will use to access the network.

Dr. Hudson said she is targeting young African American mothers because they often lack the social support and resources that are essential to maintain health and reduce risk factors for their own and their infants' lives. "We hope the NMN will provide these new mothers with the support they need to reduce their feelings of loneliness, isolation and low self-esteem, as well as improve their parenting abilities," she said.

Asthma Screening in Tribal Communities

In an effort to improve the quality of life for Native American children with asthma, a University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Nursing faculty member is embarking on a four-year research study.

T. Kim Rodehorst, Ph.D., R.N., assistant professor of the UNMC College of Nursing Scottsbluff division, is conducting the study with a \$197,856 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Native American Research Centers for Health awarded to the Aberdeen Area Tribal Chairmen's Health Board, Rapid City, South Dakota.

The grant will be used to test the feasibility of conducting an asthma screening program in Northern Plains' tribal communities. The pilot study will determine the number of asthmatic children currently undiagnosed and identify children who are not receiving the appropriate level of care for their condition.

Dr. Rodehorst said that in previous studies, she and her colleagues screened over 1,000 children in rural communities. After analyzing the data from the rural study, she anticipates implementing asthma screening in the tribal communities in about a year.

"In the rural communities, we found that some children were diagnosed with asthma, but were not taking their medication," Dr. Rodehorst said. "People were very receptive to the screening and most of the parents were glad to have the information."

Results from the tribal community screening will be compiled from written questionnaires and spirometry testing. The questionnaires have been used by the American College of Asthma, Allergy and Immunology in many community-based asthma screening programs and include 21 questions related to a person's activity level, allergies, exposure to pets and reaction to smoke or cold air. Children who are identified as being at risk for asthma through the questionnaires and spirometry are then referred to their primary health care provider.

Faculty and students from the UNMC College of Nursing and members from the tribal communities will conduct the asthma screenings. Susan L. Wilhelm, Ph.D, R.N., and MaryBeth Stepan, Ph.D, are co-investigators on the project. Consultants from South Dakota, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming are also assisting with the study.



Diabetes Prevention for Latino Children

Their study, “Culture Specific Type II Diabetes Prevention for Urban Latino School Children,” didn’t exactly yield the results they expected.

But Barbara Head, Ph.D., R.N., assistant professor at UNMC College of Nursing Omaha division and Kathleen Barr, Ph.D., R.N., associate professor at UNMC College of Nursing Omaha division were just as pleased with what they did learn. “What began as a pilot intervention study really turned out to be a feasibility study,” said Dr. Head. “From what we learned, we are now better able to broaden our research.”

While working with a group of Latino parents at an urban parochial school in Omaha, Nebraska, Drs. Barr and Head found out that interpersonal contact is the most effective way to encourage participation. None of the Latino families that were called at random and invited to the first child diabetes risk assessment showed up the day it was held, said Dr. Head. But 15 different families who were handed flyers and invited personally by graduate student and research project nurse Rosa Weatherly, B.S.N., brought their children for assessments on that day, she said. What’s more, the parents also agreed that they and their children would take part in a research study, which was funded by a \$50,000 seed grant from the Minority Health Education and Research Office at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

The first part of the study involved gathering information from Latino parents with school-aged children about their values, beliefs and attitudes on physical activity, healthy eating and their knowledge of diabetes. This was done during a series of five focus groups held at the school between June and September of 2004.

The second part of the study involved 40 children between the ages of 5 and 8 who came with their parents to the College of Nursing Mobile Nursing Center for the purpose of measuring their risk for developing type II diabetes. For the families’ convenience, the Mobile Nursing Center was parked outside the school. The information gleaned from the parents and the children’s risk assessments were then used to develop a Child Health Report Card, said Dr. Head. The report card included measures of each child’s body mass index, blood pressure, waist measurement, family history and specific skin markings. It also included advice on physical activity and food. The personal approach was important as the research nurse discussed risk factors with parents face-to-face, in Spanish or English, as they chose.

To help researchers measure the important child health behaviors of physical activity and healthy eating, parents were asked to keep track of children’s activities and what they ate for three days at a time. Children wore pager-sized devices during the same time to measure their activity levels. “Latinos were chosen for the study because they have such a high incidence of diabetes,” said Dr. Head. “While not all of the logs came back complete, we still felt we learned a lot about the feasibility of conducting this type of study, what risk factor measures worked and what was acceptable to the families who participated.”

Dr. Head said that they have since applied for a larger grant from the National Institutes of Health to hopefully continue the research.



Promotora Helps Hispanic Diabetics

Kate Nickel, Ph.D., R.N., assistant professor with the UNMC College of Nursing Kearney division is researching whether a promotora can be effective in helping Hispanic adults manage their diabetes.

A promotora is a lay educator from the community. "The value of the promotora is that the person is from the community you are trying to reach and because of this uses an approach that utilizes the cultural beliefs, experiences and values and integrates those into the effort to educate and promote behavioral change regarding diet and physical activity," Dr. Nickel said. Lexington resident Francisca Padilla is the promotora whom Dr. Nickel hired for her feasibility study: "A self management intervention for adult Hispanics with type II diabetes."

The one-year study involved 20 participants. It was funded by a \$50,000 seed grant from the University of Nebraska Medical Center Minorities in Health Education Research Office. Dr. Nickel said she would like to broaden the study to include more participants and work with Padilla again. "Francisca was an attorney in Mexico and has a sharp mind," Dr. Nickel said. "She researched the topic of diabetes even before we began training her."

Padilla was trained over a period of several weeks on diabetes education before she began meeting with study participants. Her job was to make six home visits over a six-week period, educate participants about nutrition and encourage physical activity. "We provided her with food models to show the study participants what a serving size looks like, pamphlets in Spanish for them to keep and refer to, as well as videos," Dr. Nickel said.

All of the participants received a pedometer to monitor their activity and glucometer with strips to keep track of their blood sugar. Hemoglobin A1C (not just Hgb) measurements and other data were collected at the beginning of the study, at three months and at six months by Dr. Nickel or another research nurse. Padilla made the home visits between enrollment of the study and at the three-month data collection time.

"We had three goals," Dr. Nickel said. "To see a decrease in the overall consumption of total calories and dietary fat, to increase physical activity, and to achieve better blood sugar indexes indicating better management by the participant."

Although not all of the data collected from the study have been analyzed, Dr. Nickel said she is already seeing a positive impact. "We have one participant whose hemoglobin A1C went from 14.9 to 11.5 at 3 months and to 10.2 at six months," she said. "Although a hemoglobin A1C of 7 is the target for diabetic control, our results do show steady improvement by this participant that we hope continues."

Diabetic Outreach Program

For five years Gloria Gross, Ph.D., R.N., associate professor, UNMC College of Nursing, Scottsbluff division, studied the effects of case management intervention among Native Americans and Latinos in Scottsbluff, Nebraska.

Using a combination of diabetic education and motivational interviews, Dr. Gross said she saw an increase in awareness and better self-care by participants. "Some participants began taking their medications and using them appropriately, many changed their diets and others engaged in more physical activity," she said.

From 2000 to 2003, Dr. Gross interviewed more than 350 people at a clinic she and co-investigator Marie Kreman, Ed.D., R.N., set up with a \$612,000 grant funded by the Nebraska Health and Human Services. The grant, "Panhandle Diabetic Outreach Project," enabled Drs. Gross and Kreman to find the resources participants needed to make better food choices and help pay for medications.

"We arranged for Native Americans who qualified for the study, to enroll with their tribe so they could get their medications paid for by Indian Health Services," Dr. Gross said. Participants who enrolled in the study were required to come back to the clinic every three months to have their A1C Hemoglobin tested. As an incentive to keep their appointments, participants who came to the clinic for the testing were given a food voucher to the local grocery store.

"At the beginning of the study, the mean for the A1C Hemoglobin measurement was 10.98 and at the end it had dropped to 9.5," said Dr. Gross. "Even though that was not down to where we like it, which is 7, it was much better."



Weight Loss in African American Women

Researchers at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Saint Paul's College in Lawrenceville, Virginia, are collaborating on a unique study to evaluate whether an Internet-based program will help African American women living in rural areas improve their health.

The research was initiated through the Virginia-Nebraska Alliance partnership, of which Saint Paul's College is a partner.

In 2004, UNMC and Virginia Commonwealth University and five Historically Black Colleges and Universities created a program to provide a multitude of academic and research opportunities for minority undergraduate students and faculty. The ultimate goal of the alliance is to increase the number of minority health professionals and researchers nationwide, with hopes of promoting better health outcomes for underrepresented minorities.

Dr. Carol Pullen and colleagues had conducted a previous study in mostly rural Caucasian Nebraska women. That study was funded in 2001 by the National Institutes of Health and was led by Susan Noble Walker, Ed.D, R.N. FAAN, professor and Dorothy Hodges Olson Chair in Nursing.

The current six-month pilot study is funded for \$130,000

by a grant from the UNMC Minority Health Education and Research Office. Researchers will evaluate whether an Internet-based program, called "A Web-Based Approach to Weight Loss for Rural Midlife African American Women," will help women living in Brunswick County, Va. The study will promote gradual weight loss through a healthy eating plan based on reduced caloric and fat intake and gradually increasing physical activity, said Carol Pullen, Ed.D., R.N., the study's principal investigator and professor and assistant dean for distance education and technology in the UNMC College of Nursing. Emma Staples, interim chairman of the Department of Education, Saint Paul's College in Lawrenceville, Va., will be co-investigator of the study. She said she's thrilled with the partnership. "We know stress plays a big role in African American womens' lives," Staples said.

Study participants will be evaluated in three different groups to compare the effectiveness of an interactive web site, an interactive web site and a peer-led online support group, and an interactive web site plus professional counseling support via e-mail. Researchers will evaluate weight loss, improvement of healthy eating and physical activity, at the beginning of the study and at three and six months. The women also will receive a variety of information about ways to prevent overeating, such as managing stress. Web page content will be culturally relevant and will include healthy eating and activity plans, charts for study participants logging daily food intake and activity, and weekly weight and goals.

"Weight loss is complex. Much more is needed than just information about weight loss," Dr. Pullen said. "The literature says that with monitoring weekly activity and weight loss, people are more successful. We think doing this by the Internet is an innovative way." Fifty-one African American women, age 50 to 69, who are overweight or obese (body mass index 28 to 39.9) have been recruited for the study.

It's important to find innovative ways to address obesity and the problem of being overweight which are major national health problems. According to the U.S. National Institutes of Health, obesity is one of the most daunting health challenges of the 21st century. About two-thirds of adults are overweight or obese. The problem is greater among African American women. 71 percent are overweight or obese, compared with 52 percent of Caucasian women according to a 2000 figure from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

According to Dr. Pullen, positive changes in diet and exercise can significantly change midlife and older rural women's risk for disability and premature death. "The good thing about this study is that we have found it to be successful among rural, mostly Caucasian women and we also think it will help rural African American women," Dr. Pullen said. Other co-investigators of the study include Patricia Hageman, Ph.D., and Linda Boeckner, Ph.D. both with UNMC. ●●●●

teaching across borders

“International exchanges by nursing faculty and students enrich everyone involved.”

Part of the four years a graduate student spends studying for his or her Ph.D. in nursing at UNMC are spent in the classroom. The academic value of that coursework is striking a chord with nursing instructors in countries halfway around the world. “They see it as a very valuable and useful tool for their students,” said Margaret Wilson, Ph.D., R.N., associate dean at the UNMC College of Nursing.

Dr. Wilson has been invited to teach doctoral level courses at several nursing institutions and universities in northern Europe. In turn Dr. Wilson has formed relationships with foreign faculty and students that continues to enhance her research and classroom instruction.

“International exchanges by nursing faculty and students enrich everyone involved,” she said.

Dr. Wilson has taught nursing courses to students in Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Iceland. The most popular course she teaches is theory development in nursing and health care. It’s a critical course for graduate-level nursing students, she said. “What theory development does is provide structure for the student’s research and helps the student think more critically about the work,” Dr. Wilson said. These are elements that are particularly important as the students develop their research projects for dissertation.

Earlier this year Dr. Wilson went to the University of Aarhus in Denmark, where she provided consultation to nursing faculty and doctoral students regarding their research projects.

Dr. Wilson first taught abroad in 1990 as a visiting professor at the University of Akureyri in Iceland. While there she met a bright young nursing student, Helga Lára Helgadóttir.

“We developed a friendship that continues today,” Dr. Wilson said. “Helga and I have conducted research together and in 2003 she came to UNMC to study for her Ph.D.” Helgadóttir has since completed her coursework and is currently conducting the research for her dissertation in Iceland. “I believe that any international connections, whether it is through faculty or student exchange, broaden your horizons and bring different perspectives to your work,” Dr. Wilson said. ●●●



small world

UNMC college of nursing increases participation in international exchange of students and faculty



The University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Nursing distance education program is more advanced and technologically savvy today than when it first began. The technology that today allows online classes and virtual classrooms with interaction among international students did not exist in 1974. That's when the College of Nursing first began offering its baccalaureate courses to nurses in Nebraska at a distance. Because of a 500-mile-wide campus and the need for more nurses in rural Nebraska, faculty drove hundreds of miles to take the information to the students and teach clinical skills. That need for distance education still exists today as well as a need to make it easier for rural nurses who want to obtain a higher degree to obtain one.

"The commitments these nurses already had to their families and jobs made it difficult for many to take three or more years off to come to school in Omaha, so we took the education to them," said Carol Pullen, Ed.D., R.N., Assistant Dean for Distance Education and Technology. The off-campus baccalaureate program drew even more support in 1977 with a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The grant enabled the college to offer the BSN degree to students in fifteen rural communities across the state.

"State and community colleges provided the non-nursing support courses and space for equipment and teaching and the hospitals and regional centers provided clinical

experiences," said Rosalee Yeaworth, Ph.D., R.N., former dean of the UNMC College of Nursing from 1979 to 1994. The distance education offerings have made getting a higher degree more accessible and flexible for rural nurses, reducing barriers of time, distance and transportation. "When the state satellite television system became available, it was used wherever possible," Dr. Yeaworth said. This made the process less cumbersome for faculty who previously recorded classes on videotapes and mailed them to students.

Technological Advances

Advancements in technology in the 1990s have allowed the College of Nursing to expand the way in which it transmits courses. Distance learners "attend" classes with their UNMC counterparts through the use of interactive television, Internet Protocol (IP) video and audio conferencing. The Internet and e-mail allow distance learners to interact with faculty and their UNMC classmates.

"The curriculum is the same for all of the students, whether they are in class, on campus or at a remote location. The method of delivery is the only variance," said Margaret Wilson, Ph.D., C.P.N.P., associate dean for graduate programs. "The use of distance learning technology to transmit M.S.N. graduate courses began in 1989 when classes were televised to two rural sites in Nebraska," Dr. Wilson said.

It wasn't until 1997 when the first graduate Ph.D. course was offered using distance learning technology. "Currently more than a dozen courses are being delivered either via satellite or IP video to students across the state and a dozen courses are being delivered via the Internet to students in 14 states around the country, as well as to rural Nebraska," Dr. Pullen said.

Invention of the Internet

The introduction of the Internet and World Wide Web in the early 1990s dramatically increased access to the undergraduate degree program at the College of Nursing. Now nurses in rural Nebraska and other states could enroll in the UNMC College of Nursing and earn a BSN in their own communities. "The technology had finally become available where students could access courses via the computer," said Catherine Todero, Ph.D., R.N., associate dean of undergraduate programs.

Since 1997 nearly three million dollars in federal grants have helped expand and strengthen the infrastructure of the undergraduate distance education program.

"The military nurses have found that our distance education program is great for them," Dr. Todero said. "We have students who were transferred to Japan and Kuwait, who have participated in courses to complete their degree via the distance education program."





Icelandic Scarf

Another student, Lesley Russell, R.N., who is currently employed as an O.R. nurse in Saudi Arabia, is planning to earn her B.S.N. this way. "I have friends who have done this in Saudi Arabia and they have found it to be very satisfactory," Russell said. Russell, who was formally educated in South Africa, found out about the program after applying for a Nebraska nursing license. "I was initially refused because my nursing education lacked two courses, maternity and psychiatry," she said. "I spent the fall of 2005 at the UNMC College of Nursing completing these courses and am waiting for approval to write the NCLEX exam." Currently there are 29 nurses in rural Nebraska and 17 outside of the state who are enrolled in the R.N. to B.S.N. distance education program.

Challenges for Educators

"The program is not only challenging for the students but for the educators as well," Dr. Todero said. "It has forced us to think about our teaching techniques and how to engage those students in meaningful ways that promote learning," she said. In fact, Dr. Todero has spent the last two years studying the effectiveness of the program with \$481,351 in funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration, a division of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. The study, "Distance Education of Undergraduate Nursing Students: An Innovative Model to Increase Access and Enrollment," has provided valuable insight into how nursing faculty can better educate their distance learners. "It's no longer business as usual. You are teaching students you will never see in person and it is

important to maintain the presence of a faculty member," Dr. Todero said. The study also revealed how important it is to stream video of faculty delivering their course content online. "This was very important to the students," she said. Of the 10 students who took part in the study, eight graduated last year. "When we initially envisioned the distance education undergraduate program, we thought it would be for people who had no other option," said Dr. Todero. "But what we've found is it is the preferred option by many."

"Offering graduate courses through distance learning technology is tricky," said Margaret Wilson, Ph.D., C.P.N.P., associate dean for graduate programs. But it can be done. "Fifty percent of the students in the graduate programs are not in Omaha," Dr. Wilson said. Currently there are 25 students taking graduate courses, for the M.S.N. or Ph.D., via distance education in Nebraska and 44 students outside of the state.

From Iceland to Nebraska

Helga Lára Helgadóttir recently returned to her native Iceland to complete the research for her doctorate, but not before spending two years at UNMC taking the core courses for her Ph.D. Eventually, though, Helga Lára Helgadóttir will return to UNMC and spend her final semester polishing her research and defending her dissertation.

"While any student can take the core courses to complete a graduate degree using distance technology," Dr. Wilson said, "almost all graduate students are required to come to Omaha at least once if they are seeking a M.S.N., or twice if they are seeking a Ph.D. That takes resources and can be difficult for students studying from afar, especially if they live in another country," she said. "Helga will travel to Omaha at least three times this year," Dr. Wilson said. "The development of courses and programs available to students away from our physical campuses has been an incremental process," she said. Degree requirements, the opportunity for clinical or research experiences, language barriers and whether or not a market exists for a particular skill are all things to consider. For a student who lives in a country where there are no nurse practitioners, "finding a preceptor who can provide the clinical experiences needed to complete the MSN degree is an important educational necessity," Dr. Wilson asked. However, the idea of offering graduate degrees at a distance has not been ruled out. "The specialties that are not nurse practitioner-focused may be the first to be offered to students internationally," Dr. Wilson said.

Global expansion of online learning

More countries are turning to the UNMC College of Nursing for help in boosting their nursing curriculum. Requests for programs, courses and faculty expertise have come from India, Jordan, China, Iceland and Sweden. "UNMC is internationally known as a school that offers international



Dr. Sheila Ryan and a Bedwen Soldier in Jordan

health professions education. And unlike our American counterparts on the east and west coast, we offer a unique model of outreach online learning technology that has us going to the host country to deliver education instead of just having students come to the U.S.," said Sheila Ryan, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N., director of international programs. "We work with each country individually to see what their needs are then build programs based on those needs," she said.

One such partnership came about through former graduate student Majeda El-Banna, Ph.D., who is now the dean of nursing at Al-Zaytoonah Private University (AZPU) near Amman, Jordan. Dr. El-Banna, who graduated from UNMC in the spring of 2004, said that she was impressed with the academic and technological education tools. "I was impressed with what I saw at UNMC and I wanted to have the same things in my country," she said. Her aspirations became reality in the fall of 2004 when the UNMC College of Nursing established a formal affiliation with AZPU to advance nursing education in Jordan and the Arab region.

"Jordan is advanced economically and politically respected throughout Arab countries," said Dr. Ryan. "Dr. El-Banna and I wanted to create a center in Jordan where other Arab countries could access UNMC's nursing educational outreach programs."

The collaboration includes consulting and assistance with accreditation processes, faculty and student exchanges as well as help in the creation of a learning resource center.

"We can help them deliver specialty areas in nursing such as cancer, critical care and community nursing, where currently there may be a need," Dr. Ryan said. Dr. El-Banna is also hoping to boost the number of nursing faculty at AZPU who have doctoral degrees. Khaled Suleiman is part of that

effort. Suleiman is a PhD student who is spending the next four years learning how to conduct research while attending classes and lectures before returning to teach at AZPU, which is sponsoring his education at UNMC. "Nursing science at UNMC College of Nursing is very organized and easily understandable," Suleiman said. Before coming to UNMC, Suleiman worked as a staff nurse in a Jordanian hospital. "There are more students from AZPU preparing to apply to the program and hopefully more will follow," Dr. Ryan said.

International Collaboration

Last year officials from Manipal University in Bangalore, India approached Dr. Ryan about forming a partnership that would allow Indian nursing students access to the RN to B.S.N. program via the Internet. "Manipal is a highly respected private university in India, with seven campuses, four in India and three outside of India, that are conducive to online learning," Dr. Ryan said.

That was soon followed by a request from officials at Shanghai Jiao Tong University in Shanghai, China for a collaboration that would help strengthen their nursing program through faculty and student exchanges. "We are not just providing nursing education," Dr. Ryan said, "we are educating leaders who will be able to build better programs for nursing professionals in their own countries." ♦♦♦♦



Muslim Prayer

fighting back

Breast cancer survivor, Alice Heckman, has always led a physically active life. So when the Kearney resident found out she had osteopenia, a condition that can lead to osteoporosis, she decided to do something about it. She enrolled in a clinical study at the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Nursing.

Women who survive breast cancer are at risk for another disease – osteoporosis – a disease of bone tissue, which causes deterioration and fractures. Most of the more than 2 million breast cancer survivors treated in the United



States can't take hormone replacement therapy – a common preventive treatment for osteoporosis. This puts them at much higher risk.

"The reason osteoporosis is so costly is 90 percent of hip fractures are caused by osteoporosis," said Nancy Waltman, Ph.D., R.N., associate professor of nursing, UNMC College of Nursing Lincoln Division. "Hip fractures require hospitalization more than 95 percent of the time. About 15 to 20 percent of patients require long-term care and 12 to 20 percent of patients die from complications." "Researchers think strength training is an important key to improving muscle strength and balance, which helps prevent falls, and thus broken bones," she said.

Since 2002, Dr. Waltman has been leading a team of researchers evaluating a unique approach to potentially prevent osteoporosis in post-menopausal breast cancer survivors. Through a \$2.9 million grant funded by the National Institutes of Health, researchers are evaluating 249 Nebraska women, ages 35 to 70, in a 100-mile radius of Omaha, Lincoln, Kearney and Scottsbluff.

One group of women has been taking Risedronate, a prescription drug shown to rebuild bone mass, as well as calcium and vitamin D supplements. The other group has been



(left to right) Janna Widerspan, R.N., Alice Heckman (patient) and Gaila Prill, exercise trainer

following the same regimen and participating in progressive, upper and lower body weight training to strengthen muscle and bone mass in the hip, spine and wrist.

Researchers were surprised by some of the positive results of the study. "After 12 months, women had an exceptionally high adherence rate of 90 percent in taking the medications and 80 percent in exercise," Dr. Waltman said. "Women participating in exercises had significantly improved muscle strength and balance compared to women in the non-exercise group. The results may change after 24 months, but results are promising." Information coming from the study could have a positive impact not only in breast cancer survivors, but also in the estimated 44 million Americans who currently have osteoporosis.

Co-investigators involved in the study include: Gloria Gross, Ph.D., R.N., associate professor UNMC College of Nursing West Nebraska division in Scottsbluff, Carol Ott, Ph.D., R.N., associate professor UNMC College of Nursing Kearney Division, and Janice Twiss, Ph.D., R.N. associate professor of nursing, Omaha Division, Kris Berg, Ph.D., University of Nebraska at Omaha and Timothy Moore, M.D., UNMC College of Medicine. Dr. Ada Lindsey, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN, Emeritus Professor/ Dean of UNMC College of Nursing, was a consultant. ♦♦♦♦

STARTING A NEW CHAPTER

Though Nebraska's population of Hispanics and Latinos grew 155 percent from 1990 to 2000, there are very few Hispanic or Latino nurses throughout the state. Nurses from the Hispanic and Latino communities are needed to help identify and reduce health disparities. In February 2006, a group was formed at UNMC College of Nursing to start the first Nebraska Chapter of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses. It was created with the ultimate goal of improving the health of the Hispanic/Latino community with a focus on increasing the number of Hispanic nurses in Nebraska.

"With population growth comes more disparities and it is imperative that as a state university, we help to address these issues," said Dani Eveloff, M.S.N, recruitment coordinator, University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Nursing. We need nurses that speak the language and understand the culture."

UNMC graduate nursing student, Rosa Weatherly, B.S.N. was elected president of the chapter and Luisa Rounds, an undergraduate UNMC nursing student, is president-

elect. The group has adopted by-laws, is developing a website and has recruited members across the state.

They recently received approval from the Governor's office for a proclamation declaring May 12 as Nebraska Hispanic Nurse's Day. The chapter will be officially recognized at the national conference in July.

"I feel we need to address health disparities of the Hispanic/Latino communities," said Weatherly. "The population has grown so much, and the communities are not well represented in nursing career fields. Language barrier is a problem. My passion is making sure interpreters are available for people who don't speak English. Having someone speak the language will help them get the healthcare they need as well as having someone who understands the cultural aspect."

Chapter leaders are enlisting the support of other academic, state and nursing leaders in Nebraska including the Nebraska Board of Nursing and the Nebraska Center for Nursing. ●●●



Rosa Weatherly, B.S.N. (left)
and Luisa Rounds

Symptom Management Research

Berger, Ann M., RN, PhD, AOCN, FAAN.
Fatigue & Breast Cancer - A Behavioral Sleep Intervention. National Institutes of Health/National Institute of Nursing Research, \$1,561,875.

Berger, Ann M., RN, PhD, AOCN, FAAN.
Patterns and Relationships of Fatigue and Other Factors During Chemotherapy for Colorectal Cancer. University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) Eppley Cancer Center Translational/Collaborative Research Award, \$44,666.

Berger, Ann M., RN, PhD, AOCN, FAAN.
Fatigue & Breast Cancer - A Behavioral Sleep Intervention. UNMC College of Nursing Cancer Research Fund, \$8,000.

Berger, Ann M., RN, PhD, AOCN, FAAN.
Fatigue and Related Factors During Colorectal Cancer Chemotherapy. Oncology Nursing Society, \$10,000.

Duncan, Kathleen, RN, PhD.
The Use of a Structured Walking Exercise Adherence Intervention to Improve Outcomes in Patients with Heart Failure. 2004 College of Nursing Development Research Grant, \$5,000.

LaFramboise, Louise, RN, PhD.
Outcomes for Spousal Caregivers Receiving a Telehealth Social Support Intervention. 2004 College of Nursing Development Research Grant, \$7,150.

Nelson, Audrey, RN, PhD.
Psychosocial Responses of Youth Pre- and Post-Insulin Pump Therapy. Novo Nordisk Pharmaceuticals, \$73,500.

Piper, Barbara, RN, DNSc, FAAN.
Cancer-related Fatigue: Translation of NCCN Evidence-based Guidelines in Practice: A Computerized Pilot Feasibility Study. UNMC College of Nursing Cancer Research Fund, \$5,000.

Pozehl, Bunny, RN, PhD, ANP.
Heart Failure Exercise and Resistance Training CAMP. National Institutes of Health/National Institute of Nursing Research, \$220,500.

Pozehl, Bunny, RN, PhD, ANP.
Heart Failure Exercise and Resistance Training CAMP. UNMC Clinical Research Center.

Rodehorst, T. Kim, RN, PhD.
Screening for Asthma Among Children in Northern Plains Tribal Communities. Northern Plains Tribal Epidemiology Center - Native American Research Centers for Health (NARCH) Grant, \$79,464.

Schumacher, Karen, RN, PhD.
The Development of Family Caregiving Skill During Treatment for Head and Neck Cancer: A Pilot Study. UNMC Ferlic Fund, \$10,000.

Visovsky, Constance, RN, PhD, ARNP.
Diabetes and Cancer: Impact of Common Multiple Morbidity. UNMC College of Nursing Cancer Research Fund, \$12,000.

Visovsky, C., RN, PhD, ARNP.
Strength Training for Therapy-Induced Muscle Weakness. National Institutes of Health/National Cancer Institute, \$62,575.

Zimmerman, Lani, RN, PhD.
Symptom Management Intervention in Elderly CABG Patients. National Institutes of Health/National Institute of Nursing Research, \$1,682,746.

Zimmerman, Lani, RN, PhD.
Symptom Management Intervention in Elderly CABG Patients. UNMC Clinical Research Center.

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Research

Brage Hudson, Diane, RN, PhD.
Web Based Intervention for African American Mothers. National Institutes of Health/National Institute of Nursing Research, \$220,500.

Buchanan, Lynne M., RN, PhD, ANP.
Smoking Cessation Intervention for High Risk Populations. Oncology Nursing Society, \$10,000.

Head, Barbara, RN, PhD.
Nursing Outcomes Effectiveness: Hospitalized Elders with Pneumonia. Gerontological Nursing Interventions Research Center and the Hartford Center of Geriatric Nursing Excellence, University of Iowa College of Nursing, \$15,000.

Kaiser, Margaret, RN, PhD.
The Experience of Becoming a Mother in Adolescence. UNMC College of Nursing Research Fund, \$2,000.

Pullen, Carol, RN, EdD.
Promoting Healthy Eating and Activity in Overweight Older Rural Women. 2004 College of Nursing Development Research Grant, \$8,486.

Pullen, Carol, RN, EdD.
A Web Based Approach to Weight Loss for Rural African American Women. UNMC Minority Health Education and Research Office/Virginia-Nebraska Alliance, \$130,000.

Sather, Linda, RN, EdD.
Enhancing Physical Activity of Low Income Community Residing Older Adults. 2004 College of Nursing Developmental Research Grant, \$3,000.

Walker, Susan Noble, RN, EdD, FAAN, & Carol H. Pullen, RN, EdD.
Promoting Healthy Eating and Activity in Rural Women. National Institutes of Health/National Institute of Nursing Research, \$1,675,118.

Walker, Susan Noble, RN, EdD, FAAN.
Promoting Healthy Eating and Activity in Rural Women. UNMC Clinical Research Center.

Walker, Susan Noble, RN, EdD, FAAN.
Modifying Lifestyle in Prehypertensive Older Rural Women. UNMC Bridge Grant, \$50,000.

Waltman, Nancy, RN, PhD, ANP.
Prevention of Osteoporosis in Breast Cancer Survivors. National Institutes of Health/National Institute of Nursing Research, \$2,988,024.

Wilhelm, Susan, RN, PhD.

Motivational Interviewing to Promote Sustained Breastfeeding. UNMC Minority Health Education and Research Office Grant (MiHERO), \$80,054.

Health Systems Research

Grigsby, Karen, RN, PhD.

Changes in Nursing Practice After Implementation of an Automated Clinical Documentation System. Sigma Theta Tau International, \$4,999.

Heermann, Judith, RN, PhD.

Development of Evaluation Tools for Use in Caregiver Education. UNMC College of Nursing Research Fund, \$2,000.

Kaiser, Katherine, RN, PhD.

Predictors of Health Services Use for Low Income African-American Children. UNMC Minority Health Education and Research Office Grant (MiHERO), \$56,123.

Keating-Lefler, Rebecca, RN, PhD.

System Effectiveness in Meeting Needs of Single, Low Income Mothers: A Grounded Theory. UNMC College of Nursing Research Fund, \$2,000.

Snyder, Rita, RN, PhD.

Impact of Community Health CPOE System on ADE Outcome. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, \$484,619.

Thompson, Cheryl, RN, PhD.

Nursing Informatics. Subcontract with Mayo Clinic Foundation, \$45,000.

Graduate Student Research Grants

Anderson, Karen (PI), & Carol Pullen (Faculty Advisor).

Physical Activity Adherence in Black Women Over 65. National Institutes of Health/ National Institute of Nursing Research, \$34,229.

Bosak, Kelly (PI), & Bernice Yates (Faculty Advisor). *A Telehealth Intervention for Lifestyle Changes to Reduce CHD Risk in the Metabolic Syndrome.* American Heart Association, \$25,000.

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Norman and Bernice Harris have long supported the University of Nebraska. Mr. Harris graduated from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln (UNL) in 1941 and both he and his wife received Honorary Doctorates of Humane Letters from UNL in 1993.

Their support for the university led them to establish the Harris Center for Judaic Studies at UNL and to donating scholarship funds to the journalism school. In recent years, the Harrises have extended their support to the University of Nebraska Medical Center supporting the Eppley Cancer Center and the UNMC College of Nursing.

In honor of his wife, Harris established the Bernice Harris Nursing Fund which generously supports awards and scholarships for nursing education. "A good nurse is worth her or his weight in gold," Harris said, referring to the nursing care that he has seen his wife receive.

Over the years, Harris has watched his beloved wife battle several bouts of cancer and most recently, Lewy Bodies disease, a rare form of dementia. In all those years, Harris said his wife has always received excellent nursing care.

"The nurses have really looked after Bernice and have



been so wonderful to her," Harris said. "I'm only sorry that because of the dementia that Bernice doesn't know that I'm doing this."

Harris said he'll never forget the day that he met Bernice. "June 5, 1939, I saw a flaming redhead standing on her grandparents' porch and it was like cupid had launched an arrow," he said. The couple has been married for 65 years. "That's why I'm doing it," Harris said of the endowment, "In Bernice's honor and because of the nursing care that she has received throughout the years."

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