Research Societies and the Advancement of Nursing Science

Susan J. Henly

Congratulations to the Western Institute of Nursing (WIN)! This year, WIN celebrates the 60th anniversary of its founding and the 50th anniversary of its Communicating Nursing Research conference. Both these exciting milestones are opportunities for reflecting on the history and ongoing importance of research societies to the advancement of science in general and to nursing science.

The first meeting of a learned society for science met in London in 1660 (The Royal Society, 2017). As natural philosophers and physicians, the Royal Society membership was committed to supporting the highest standards in science and communication of discovery in science. Their Philosophical Transactions, first published in 1665, stands as the longest published journal in science. The Society timeline shows the incredible contributions that members have made to the general well-being of society, made possible in part through the supporting structures provided to scientists: opportunities for sharing their work and having it critiqued, obtaining grant funding, and creating an atmosphere for ensuring sustainability of science.

Research societies have likewise played a critical role in advancing nursing science. Within the United States, WIN began in 1957 as the Western Council on Higher Education for Nursing. In 1970, the American Nurses Association authorized establishment of a Council (Cabinet) of Nurse Researchers. The Cabinet operated to gain support for nursing research at the federal level (American Nurses Association, n.d.; National Institute of Nursing Research & Cantelon, 2010, p. 6). In 1975, the Midwest Nursing Research Society was founded; in 1988, the Eastern Nursing Research Society began; in 1986, the Southern Nursing Research Society was established, with membership extended to include the Caribbean Latin America and the Bahamas in 1991. In 2000, the American Nurses Association Cabinet was superseded by the Council for the Advancement of Nursing Science (CANS), an open membership entity of the American Academy of Nursing. Council for the Advancement of Nursing Science aims for “better health through nursing research” with a strong voice at the national and international levels, dissemination of nursing research, and support for life-long learning for nurse scientists (www.nursingscience.org). During these times and up through the present, similar efforts to establish societies dedicated to the advancement of nursing research have been launched across the world.

Providing mechanisms for dissemination is a high priority for research societies. Traditionally, societies host conferences to circulate new ideas and use journals to extend dissemination beyond those attending conferences and to create a permanent scientific record. Nowadays, societies and their journals extend dissemination and dialogue using social media. Nursing Research is honored to serve as the official journal for WIN and Eastern Nursing Research Society and collaborate in their dissemination missions.

This issue of Nursing Research includes a Special Focus Section in celebration of the WIN anniversaries. The fascinating history of WIN, encapsulated by McNeil and Lindeman (2017), illustrates the enduring WIN value for interweaving nursing research with nursing education to optimize nursing practice and benefit the health of individuals, families, communities, and populations served by nurses in the U.S. Western region. The future of nursing research, education, and practice is envisioned in the synopsis of keynote addresses presented at the 50th Communicating Nursing Research Conference, held in April in Denver (Young, Bakewell-Sachs, & Sarna, 2017).

Young et al. (2017) concluded their keynote summary by writing “WIN is more relevant than ever as we collectively advance nursing, health, and healthcare.” Investigators across the world: take heart at this conclusion. Be inspired to join your nursing research society. Be an active and engaged member—take part in governance, be present at conferences, submit papers to society journals. Within the research society, nurture trainees to a life in science. As a society member, engage with nursing educators, practicing nurses, and policy makers to ensure translation of research findings to better the health of those we serve.

Susan J. Henly, PhD, RN, FAAN, is Editor of Nursing Research. The author has no conflicts of interest to declare. Accepted for publication March 22, 2017. Corresponding author: Susan J. Henly, PhD, RN, FAAN, School of Nursing, University of Minnesota, 5-140 Weaver-Densford Hall, 308 Harvard St. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455 (e-mail: henly003@umn.edu). Copyright © 2017 Wolters Kluwer Health, Inc. All rights reserved. DOI: 10.1097/NNR.0000000000000225
REFERENCES


Young, H. M., Bakewell-Sachs, S., & Sarna, L. (2017). Nursing practice, research, and education in the West: The best is yet to come [Invited commentary]. Nursing Research, 66, 262-270. doi:10.1097/NNR.0000000000000218