

Nursing's seat at the research roundtable

WHO's Year of the Nurse and Midwife 2020 began as an unforeseen global health-care crisis quietly gained traction. With no disease-specific prevention, treatment or cure for COVID-19, public health measures and supportive care—interventions developed and delivered largely by nurses—were the first and remain the only unequivocally effective defences against severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2.

Nurses have earned well deserved recognition for their essential roles in providing skilled, compassionate care for patients throughout this pandemic. What has been left out of the conversation is that, in addition to being on the frontlines of care delivery, nurses are also researchers. In the year honouring nurses, it deserves mention that this profession has been responsible for some of the most important contributions to public health and the science of patient care.¹ The wealth of ideas flowing from nurses should come as no surprise, given that nurses spend the most time with patients and families as they navigate health, sickness, crisis, and bureaucracy in our health-care systems.² However, much of the public and some members of the academic community are surprised to learn that many nurses also earn the rigorous methodological training required to lead exacting programmes of research through PhD degrees in nursing, epidemiology, physiology, microbiology, data science, economics, and health policy—just to name a few.

Honouring individual historical nurse researchers as unusual inadvertently perpetuates a misleading narrative that nursing research has been dormant for centuries. To the contrary, countless nurse researchers live among us, working tirelessly to improve patients' lives and transform health care across the globe. There is perhaps no better evidence of this insidious narrative

than the failure to include a nurse on the US White House Coronavirus Task Force, despite the fact that nurses make up the largest segment of the health-care workforce, are the most trusted profession, and are the members of the health-care team largely responsible for communicating with and educating patients and families.³⁻⁵ With unparalleled perspectives gleaned from the frontlines, nurse researchers are uniquely prepared to advance any research agenda that addresses our collective health during COVID-19 and beyond.

In every aspect of public life, we are learning that policies made without all voices at the table are destined to fail, particularly when issues of equity and access are involved. To ensure a future in which health care is efficient, equitable, cost-effective, and patient-centred, let us remember to always fill nursing's seat at the research roundtable.

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- 2 Butler R, Monsalve M, Thomas GW, et al. Estimating time physicians and other health care workers spend with patients in an intensive care unit using a sensor network. *Am J Med* 2018; **131**: 972.e9-15.
- 3 Dermenchyan A, Choi K. White House coronavirus task force is missing a nurse. Aug 22, 2020. <https://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/513191-white-house-coronavirus-task-force-is-missing-a-nurse> (accessed Sept 24, 2020).
- 4 Reinhart RJ. Nurses continue to rate highest in honesty, ethics. Jan 6, 2020. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/274673/nurses-continue-rate-highest-honesty-ethics.aspx> (accessed Sept 24, 2020).

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