

Getting Back to the Basics ...

“... the nursing profession has its own ideals and standards, its own body of knowledge, its own skills, its own special function and contribution, as distinct from medicine, in the maintenance of health, and the prevention and cure of disease. This distinct contribution of nursing, although it applies the principles and methods of psychology, hygiene and the biological, social, and physical sciences, all too frequently fails to receive due recognition ...” (Harmer 1930: p.v).

While Harmer’s (1930) text was long ago supplanted by new texts about nursing practice fundamentals (e.g., Berman et al. 2015; Potter et al. 2014), the premise of her introductory comments remains relevant. Reading the authors’ contributions to this issue led me to reflect on the basics, the core principles of good nursing care, taught to all of us during our formative years in nursing school. It also gave me pause to consider what has transpired in nursing and healthcare over the course of the last century that has essentially led to a devaluing and under-estimation of the impact of the basics on healing and health. Are the essentials of good hygiene, skin care, nutrition, ambulation, teaching and emotional support as provided by professional nurses no longer priorities in practice? Hopefully, this is not so. Decades of scientific and technological advances do not negate the overall import of the fundamentals of care. In this issue, our authors irrefutably underscore this view. In the face of all our tools and knowledge let us be proud and not shy away from the fundamentals as the core of nursing practice.

I am pleased to introduce this special issue on the “Fundamentals of Care” and wish to thank Dr.’s MacMillan and Kitson for their leadership in compiling this compelling collective and their respective contributions to the dialogue. This issue provides an essential “call to action” for all nurse leaders in practice and academia. I bid you to heed the call.

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