

PROMOTING NURSING RESEARCH

The Center for Nursing Research at the University of Michigan

Judy G. Ozbolt

HISTORY

In 1961, when the University of Michigan School of Nursing initiated its master's degree programs, the faculty decided that the focus would be on scholarship and that students would conduct research. There were at that time, however, no doctorally prepared nurses on the faculty to provide research training. Consequently, the School of Nursing recruited faculty members prepared in other disciplines—usually behavioral sciences—to teach courses and direct research experiences. Over the next decade, the Research Area faculty collaborated with nursing graduate students and faculty to develop a model for excellence in clinical nursing research.

A number of changes occurred during the 1970s. A computing laboratory begun in the late 1960s grew into a major resource for teaching and conducting data analysis, allowing nursing students and faculty members to carry out increasingly sophisticated research. The master's programs grew and diversified, and in 1975 the School admitted the first students to the Ph.D. program. Doctorally prepared nurses were recruited to all instructional areas, including the Research Area, and many faculty members who had been on board earned doctorates. In this environment, research grew rapidly. Faculty members throughout the school began to receive major research grants, and the Research Area played a large role in this development. Research Area faculty members were the principal investigators on a number of grants and served as

Judy G. Ozbolt, Ph.D., R.N., Associate Professor and Program Director, Biomedical Research Support Grant, School of Nursing, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

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coinvestigators or consultants on others. In addition, they offered informal consultation and assistance to foster their colleagues' research efforts.

By the end of its second decade, the Research Area had compiled an estimable record. Evaluations of the graduate programs consistently gave high ratings to the research experience. Faculty members and graduate students frequently published research articles in refereed journals. Graduate students often received research grants. Funded research by faculty members, although limited to a relatively few active researchers, nevertheless made up a sizable fraction of the total funding for nursing research nationally. Faculty members who had had their first research experiences at Michigan were moving to leadership positions in other major universities. The Research Area had played a central role in bringing the University of Michigan to a position of national and international prominence in nursing research.

In 1982, the Research Area became the Center for Nursing Research. Relieved of instructional responsibilities and reduced in size, the center has research facilitation as its primary charge. It continues to promote nursing research and shares in the success of the record number of faculty members, now more than a dozen, who are conducting extramurally funded research. Funding is from various institutes of the National Institutes of Health, from the Division of Nursing, and from the National Science Foundation. In addition, 18 grants are currently pending for extramural funding.

FUNDING

Funding for the Center for Nursing Research comes primarily from the School of Nursing, although some important resources are provided by grants. From 1981 through 1985, the Nursing Research Emphasis Grant for Doctoral Programs in Nursing (NRE/DPN) fostered research focused on the elderly person. New investigators and investigators new to gerontological nursing secured grants for research on such topics as taste complaints of older persons, patterns of coping in families caring for elders, life experiences and perceptions of aging, and attitudes and factual knowledge of aging in nursing students. Several recipients of awards for NRE/DPN component studies have subsequently secured independent research grants. NRE/DPN funds also supported shared research resources, including salary for an administrative assistant for research facilitation and the purchase of computing equipment.

Since 1978 the School of Nursing has also benefited from annual Biomedical Research Support Grants (BRSG). The school's discretionary powers under the BRSG guidelines make it possible to respond quickly to emerging and sometimes sudden needs for research support in amounts ranging from a few dollars to a few thousand dollars. BRSG funds have helped to start new projects,

to bridge the gap when an ongoing project was between grants, to pay unexpected expenses of an extramurally funded project, to support travel to conferences to present research reports, to purchase reprints of research articles, to equip laboratories, to buy computing equipment for faculty research, and to pay research assistants. Since 1983, these funds have also helped to support Faculty Research Fellowships, paying expenses and limited summer salaries for faculty members to do preliminary work leading to a proposal for extramural research funding. Awarded on a competitive basis, the Faculty Research Fellowships have paid off richly in proposals submitted and extramural grants awarded.

FACILITIES

The Center for Nursing Research develops and maintains a number of facilities to support faculty research. The *Computing Laboratory* contains a number of terminals connected by telephone to the university's Amdahl 5860 computer, as well as a variety of microcomputers. The laboratory is heavily used year-round by students and faculty members for data analysis, computer-aided instruction, word processing, and message services. Computing facilities and services will increase in 1985-86 when the University installs a major computing substation in space belonging to the Center for Nursing Research.

The Center for Nursing Research also has equipped and maintained a *Behavioral Laboratory* that includes comfortable furnishings, several mirrored observation rooms, and a variety of video and audio recording equipment. The Behavioral Laboratory is available for research and instructional purposes. In addition, a *Physiology Laboratory* provides wet-lab bench space for a variety of studies.

To meet the growing demand by both students and faculty members for access to computer software and documentation, the Center for Nursing Research provides a *Computer Software Library* from which materials may be checked out for a limited time. The center also maintains a *Nursing Research Library* containing reference material for research and information about funding agencies. A microfiche reader/printer is available, along with a large collection of nursing studies.

SERVICES

Research efforts within the School of Nursing are coordinated and facilitated internally through the Center for Nursing Research. In addition to admin-

istering the funding and facilities described above, the center assists in the mechanics of grant preparation, in identifying reviewers for proposals before submission, and in consulting on research design and data analysis. An annual series of research symposia on nursing topics is being planned. Productivity breeds productivity, and the Center for Nursing Research is proud to be a part of a vital and growing research institution.