
From the editor

The American Nurses' Association (ANA) has recently published an important document setting forth the definition and scope of nursing titled *Nursing: A Social Policy Statement*. As noted in this publication, the definition and scope of nursing at the outset of the 1980s reflects the historical orientation of nursing and the influence of nursing theory that is part of nursing's evolution. It is interesting to review this document in light of the stated purposes of *ANS* and to recognize ways in which *ANS* has contributed, and needs to better contribute, to the development of nursing.

The ANA statement defines nursing as "the diagnosis and treatment of human responses to actual or potential health problems."^{1(p9)} One of the four defining characteristics of nursing outlined is the nature of the phenomena that are of concern to nurses. In the illustrative list of human responses to health problems that are given, several responses are identified in this and other issues of *ANS*. Problematic affiliative relationship, anxiety, loss, grief, deficiencies in decision making, and impaired functioning in areas such as rest, ventilation, circulation, activity are a few of the responses that are given as examples of the type of phenomena that are of concern for nursing.

A second defining characteristic of nursing identified in the ANA statement is the use and application of theory—concepts, principles, processes, and the like, to sharpen observations and to understand phenomena within the domain of nursing practice.^{1(p11)} This characteristic is central to the purpose of *ANS*, as reflected in the statement of purpose. The articles in this issue are predominantly concerned with the development and use of theories and models that can be tested and applied

in nursing practice where affiliative relationships, loss of relationships, and change occur.

The third defining characteristic outlined in the ANA policy statement is the nature of nursing actions—actions designed to ameliorate, improve, or correct conditions of illness and to promote health.^{1(p12)} Specific implications for nursing action are provided in many of the articles in this and other issues, based on the theories and models presented.

Finally, the ANA statement identifies the evaluation of nursing actions as a defining characteristic of nursing. Research evidence to substantiate the relation of particular nursing actions to specific phenomena is specifically mentioned in the statement as providing more rigorous scientific evidence of benefits of nursing actions than is provided by periodic evaluation or testimonials. It is in this area that the composition of this and many other issues of *ANS* are lacking. The research evidence that is needed to document the effectiveness of theoretical application has not yet, apparently, been generated. As the ANA statement acknowledges, investigation and action are interrelated. The theoretical arguments that are presented in *ANS*, sometimes also containing limited clinical trials, do hold importance and relevance for nursing, and they do seem logically related to the domain of nursing's practice and area of concern. What is sorely needed is research evidence testing the theoretical claims and recommendations contained in this and other nursing literature.

I urge you, as a reader of *ANS*, to use *ANS* to stimulate your own development as a nurse re-searching the worth and value of the selected propositions that you glean from this and other issues of *ANS*. We want to continue to publish theory development articles

in *ANS*: This has become a hallmark of our success. At the same time, we need to improve our reporting of research evidence substantiating the theoretical significance of nursing actions. If you are involved in research or have completed research related to one of our projected topics, please let us hear from you!

REFERENCE

1. American Nurses' Association: *Nursing: A Social Policy Statement*, ANA Publication Code NP-63 35M 12/80, Kansas City, Mo.: American Nurses' Association, 1980.

Peggy L. Chinn
Editor