
From the editor

ART AND ESTHETICS IN NURSING

In the first issue of *Advances in Nursing Science*, published 16 years ago, Barbara Carper¹ identified four patterns of knowing in nursing. Now one of the most widely cited articles in the nursing literature, Carper's work has stood the test of time and debate. There are now other equally viable interpretations concerning patterns of knowing that build on Carper's work. The value of her work lies in the fact that she opened doors of possibility for nursing knowledge development that enabled it to move beyond the limits of empirical inquiry. Ironically appearing in a new journal with the word "science" in its title, Carper's interpretations led to widespread recognition that nurses and nursing depend on and need forms of knowing in addition to and other than empirics alone.

In part because of the door that Carper¹ opened, philosophic inquiry, particularly related to nursing ethics, has become a valued and valuable method of inquiry in nursing. Methods associated with art and esthetics, as with personal knowing, have been slower to evolve and develop. My own interest in esthetics as a pattern of knowing in nursing led me to pursue the development of inquiry methods drawing on methods used in the arts and humanities.² This has been an arduous project, in part because of the difficulty of moving into a nondiscursive realm of knowing.

Words, concepts, and language, as symbolic and metaphoric expressions, are often part of esthetic expression (as in poetry). However, esthetic expression moves into levels of awareness and understanding that cannot be translated or explained in the more familiar approaches of empirical or philosophic inquiry. Despite this challenge, like the authors whose work appears in this issue, I have persisted in exploring esthetics, recognizing that deep meanings of human experience associated with

health and illness defy expression in any medium other than what we know as art.

The work that has recently emerged in developing esthetic knowing in nursing moves into several dimensions, most of which are reflected in the articles in this issue of *Advances in Nursing Science* (17:1). One dimension is the development of artistic expression by nurses to convey esthetic meaning known through the experience of nursing. Another is the study of an artist's work to gain deep understanding of human experiences related to health and illness. Another dimension is developing understanding of nursing as an art form, including how it is expressed and the inspiration from which it flows. Another is the use of art as a therapeutic, healing, or learning tool. These various approaches to inquiry are different from the methods used in the more familiar realm of empirics that we know as science and have unique criteria by which their worth or adequacy is judged. More fundamentally, esthetic inquiry is beginning to raise interesting questions about what it means to know, about the fundamental nature of "science" as we have known it and as it could become in the future.

This issue of the journal continues the fine traditions of *ANS* that Carper had a key role in establishing—challenging the status quo, bringing to light possibilities that are not yet widely recognized, and providing alternative views for discussion and debate. I invite you, the reader, to share your responses, thoughts, questions that these articles bring forth for you.

REFERENCES

1. Carper BA. Fundamental patterns of knowing in nursing. *ANS*. 1978;1(1):13–23.
2. Chinn PL. Developing a method for aesthetic knowing in nursing. In Chinn PL, Watson J, eds. *An Anthology on Art and Aesthetics in Nursing*. New York, NY: National League for Nursing; 1994.

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