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INFORMATION AS CREATIVE ENERGY

Chinn, Peggy L. RN, PhD, FAAN

▼ Author Information

Editor

[I]nformation is a dynamic, changing element, taking center stage. Without information, life cannot give birth to anything new; information is absolutely essential for the emergence of new order.¹(pp94-95)

The process of transitions is fundamental in nursing.² As scholars and as providers in health care, we continue to experience times of amazing change and transition within educational and health care delivery systems. Some of the changes are welcomed, perceived as advances and improvements over the past. Other changes move toward improvements in some respects, while at the same time leaving a sense of vacuum or loss in other respects. Many feel overwhelmed, unable to comprehend the complexity and extent of the changes that are taking place.

The sheer volume and complexity of information that is now available seem particularly overwhelming. The overload comes in part from the images of information as bits or pieces that can be and are counted and stored, transferred from one place to another as needed. Scientists find new information, publish their findings, and add them to the stores of knowledge contained in textbooks and canons of the discipline. Computers organize, manage, and analyze information, creating summaries and statistics that yield yet new information. These images of information focus on volume and quantity, not on the dynamic and interactive nature of information.

Wheatley ¹ points out that information is not a "thing" that is limited and quantifiable, but rather it is a process of unpredictable and constantly changing character, a process that interacts meaningfully between giver and receiver. Metaphorically, information is nourishment, the processes from which that which is new takes form. Like the infinite varieties of foods that carry the physical nutrients needed to sustain life, and from which life grows, information provides that which is needed to sustain interactive and relational systems. Information is created by humans who imbue that which is known with certain understandings and interpretations and, as it is shared, those who take it in shape and create their own understandings and interpretations. It is the interaction, the various forms of meaning, that provides the energy from which new growth arises.

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Outline

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Articles in a professional journal like *Advances in Nursing Science* convey information to the discipline in the sense of nourishment. Authors present not just facts and conclusions. Their work interprets meanings and insights that come from their own perspectives, experiences, and investments of investigation that have created the whole of what appears on the pages. Their ideas can be indexed, categorized, and "managed" in a database, but the real substance and meaning of their work lie in that which emerges next in their work, and in that which emerges as readers take in, interpret, and move forward to create something previously unpredicted and unimagined.

—Peggy L. Chinn, RN, PhD, FAAN

Editor

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