



Ministry for Social Policy



Department of  
Nursing Services Standards,  
Public Health Regulation

# THE LINK

*Newsletter for Midwives and Nurses*

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## A Word from the Director

In the previous issue of 'The Link' I had referred to the organisational restructuring within the Health Division. In this editorial, I shall focus on issues of regulation, quality and the moral obligation of each health care professional in the pursuit of excellence during the delivery of service. There is general agreement that if health care delivered is one of the highest quality, this is done in public interest. All stakeholders in the delivery of care claim that they do such always in the patients' interest. However, these stakeholders may have other aims to accomplish, such as professional fulfilment, advancement of science, improved conditions of work or cost containment, which at times may conflict with such a mission to pursue the highest quality health care. There is no doubt that it is the regulators who pursue such a mission in the public interest. State health regulatory bodies which license health services entities, judge the value of the providers in terms of access, quality and cost. Licensure is one of the mechanisms employed to establish such certification for one to be able to operate in the public interest.

The presence of regulators is conducive to the attainment of quality health care but it may not be enough. There is an ethical obligation for health services entities and professionals to practise self-regulation. Avedis Donabedian stated that "*The pursuit of quality is, in essence, the moral dimension of professional life.*"<sup>1</sup> The pursuit of quality and its eventual embracing involves not only nurses and doctors, but includes other health care professionals, assistant personnel, administrators, planners and regulators. Self-regulation is an attitude. It is an attitude that helps achieve the optimal delivery of care to the patient. Providing access, enhancing quality at an optimal cost is essentially an attitude. It is attitude that improves or stifles patient outcomes. Quality nursing which is an important dimension of health care delivery is also part of 'the attitude' that is essential to improve patient outcomes. Having knowledgeable nursing or medical professionals is important but is not enough. This notion ties well with Lance Armstrong's (a cancer survivor and champion cyclist) famous statement: "*In my battle with cancer, I learned that knowledge is power and attitude is everything.*" It is attitude that makes or breaks a patient's experience, it is attitude that leaves an indelible mark on one's perception of health care service delivery, it is attitude that is everything. I would like to conclude with Jerri Fogleman's (1971) poetic words to corroborate such statements. "**Nursing is an attitude - Technique is only part. Communication, empathy, and Listening - it's art.**" ...<sup>2</sup>

**Jesmond Sharples**

Director, Nursing Services Standards

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<sup>1</sup> **Steen John** "Regionalization for Quality: Certificate of Need and Licensure Standards"  
In: <http://www.ahpanet.org/files/Regionalization%20for%20Quality.pdf> Accessed 29.07.2008

<sup>2</sup> **Jerri Fogleman** (1971) "Nursing is an Attitude" *The American Journal of Nursing*, Vol. 71, No. 9 (Sep., 1971), pp. 1757

## Nursing Standards and Policies: A Brief Overview.

'Some nurses often consider direct patient care, as the only focus of nursing. However, the role of the nurse is broader than that of direct care and encompasses many components. According to Milstead (2003), involvement in policy making is not an option for a professional nurse, but a necessity to influence healthcare. Collectively, nurses are a powerful group because of the large numbers compared to other professions, and also because nurses are agents for their clients and the profession. West, & Scott (2000), argue that if clinical care is to be improved, nurses need to take a more active role in making and implementing health policy at both local and national levels.

Nursing policies and standards serve as a benchmark, aid in enhancing consistency and increase accountability. Policies contribute to increase role clarity and legal standing and establish further reference for newly qualified nurses. They are also a point of reference to all nurses when requiring guidance on specific procedures, and are a move towards quality assurance and quality initiatives.

Standards may be utilized to reduce fragmentation and enhance a consistent focus of care, create clinical tools such as guidelines, and clinical pathways. They may serve to determine and clarify core competencies for education and certification programs and to provide a foundation for evaluation of competencies and quality of care.

Nursing policy development and nursing standard setting is a recent developmental trend in the local nursing sphere. Historically and locally, nurses had unwritten policies and practices. Even abroad, practice was previously characterized by either an absence of policies or unwritten, hidden policies. In recent years, there has been a move towards formal policy development and guidelines at hospital level from various hospitals in Malta and Gozo. The Department Nursing Services Standards is involved in research, policy and audit in the process of policy development and standard setting for nurses at national level.

The policy process involves assessing which areas of nursing care need to be addressed with policies and standards and researching the topic. This is followed by developing a national policy and outlining the standards and expected outcomes to be reached. Relevant members of the health care team compile these documents in a working group, and also consult with various stakeholders prior to the documents being issued. An audit is conducted to evaluate if the expected outcomes are being met and if quality of care is improved.

Professionals have an important role in the production and dissemination of knowledge related to policy. They also have an important role in the interpretation and implementation of policy in practice. Steel, Rocchiccioli, & Porche, (2003) maintain that one of the roles of nurse managers' participation in the policy process may be that of mentor and facilitator to staff nurses. Nurse participation is to ensure inclusion of nursing's unique perspective in policy decisions.

### **Ms Sarah Fleri,**

MSc Health Science (Nursing),

BSc (Hons) Nursing, SN.

Focal Person for Nursing Standards.

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## Horatio: European Festival of Psychiatric Nursing The age of dialogue. 5<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> November 2008.



From Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> till Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2008, Malta will serve as the centre of psychiatric nursing practice, education management and clinical developments. The Maltese Association of Psychiatric Nurses (MAPN) will be the local host of the Horatio European Festival of Psychiatric Nursing and will play an important part in stage managing this event, which is being described by many as 'THE' psychiatric nursing event of the year.

This exciting experience, the first of its kind in Europe, will attract around 600 delegates from all around Europe, as well as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Japan, China, Africa, Middle East and South America.

It is important to note that this event is not being marketed as a conference, but as a festival. That is because it will be like no other conference that you have ever attended. The main scientific programme will run throughout the five days but this will be peppered with music, arts, poetry, drama, music, competitions, art exhibitions, an auction and guest celebrities coming to talk about mental health issues. In addition delegates will be expected to take part in debates, workshops and discussion groups and it is Horatio's aim to publish as much of the outcome as possible. It was a tough task for the HORATIO expert panel, chaired by Mr. Martin Ward, to select among the hundreds of abstracts received.

The first announcement flyer will be distributed to 20,000 emails addresses and mailed to a further 200 worldwide very shortly, whilst the programme, with frequent updates, is going on the Horatio website at [www.horatio-web.eu](http://www.horatio-web.eu)

The confirmed keynote speakers thus far include:

- Dr Matt Muijen – Director of Mental Health (Europe) W.H.O. – Denmark

- Professor Maritta Välimäki - University of Turku – Finland
- Mrs Mary Van Dievel – Director, Mental Health Europe – Belgium
- Mr Pascal Rod – President, European Specialist Nursing Organisations – France
- Professor Hilary McCallion - South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust - UK
- Professor John Cutcliffe – Tyler University – Texas – USA
- Professor Phil Barker – Clan Unity: Mental Health Recovery and Reclamation – Scotland
- Mr Jürgen Scheftlein - Health Determinants Unit, DG SANCO, European Commission – Luxembourg
- Mr Oliver Lewis – Executive Director of Mental Disability Advocacy Centre – Bulgaria
- Mr Martin Ward – Chair, Horatio: European Expert Panel of Psychiatric Nursing – Malta

The event will be held in the Corinthia San Gorg Marina and SAS Radisson complex in St George's Bay. Special delegate rates, including whole event or daily rates, apply to Maltese delegates.

If you have any questions, or queries about registration for the event contact MAPN on [mapsychnurses@gmail.com](mailto:mapsychnurses@gmail.com) or the Festival admin team on [horatiofestival@gmail.com](mailto:horatiofestival@gmail.com)

**Key Note:** HORATIO was officially established as an Association in April 2006 and represents Europe's 350,000 psychiatric nurses at the European Federation of Nursing (EFN). MAPN represents the Maltese Psychiatric Nurses within HORATIO as a member of the board.

**Kevin Gafa`** - Psychiatric Nurse,  
President MAPN

**Martin Ward** - Independent Mental Health Nursing Consultant. Chair, Horatio European Expert Panel

## ICM Triennial Congress: Midwifery Worldwide Commitment to Woman and the Newborn - Glasgow: June 2008

The International Confederation of Midwives, held a congress in Glasgow in June 2008. 14 midwives from Malta were among other 3000 midwives from 80 countries. This group was made up of midwives from the Clinical area, Parent craft and Practice Development.

This congress was a great inspiration for midwives to further their education as promoters of normal childbirth. The scientific programme covered the whole range of midwifery topics that reflect the role of the midwife, keeping birth normal was the main theme. This congress had a full and intense programme, often with 15 sessions running at one time.

Although keeping birth normal, is the greatest commitments of Midwifery to woman and the newborn and different levels are attained in developed and developing countries. In the developing world death claims one woman in childbirth every minute. Dr Aparajita Gogoi explained how the White Ribbon Alliance brought about policy change in India where untrained *Dai* conduct 73% of births. This change sought to train midwives to give essential drugs and perform skills that save lives.

The U.K. National average Caesarian Section rate for 1990 was 12% doubling to 24% by 2005-2006. It was observed that this increase was not accompanied by a measurable improvement in the outcome of the baby. The NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement presented their project which was developed to promote normal outcome in childbirth and that every Caesarean section is appropriate, effective and efficient. The problem was approached in a multi disciplinary manner within a collegiate relationship between obstetricians, midwives, anaesthetists and midwife managers.

Princess Muna of Jordan stated that educated women make better decisions for the health of their families and they tend to have better outcome in their pregnancies. She called upon midwives not only to care for families but to expand their role as educators.

*Heartfelt thanks to all who facilitated our absence from work in order to attend this congress, especially midwives who changed their duties in the clinical area.*

**Antoinette Formosa**, Midwife  
Central Delivery Suite, MDH

### Congratulations

To all new graduates who successfully passed their exams and have graduated in their respective courses.

To all those prospective students who have decided to enrol in courses, to further their nursing studies.

**Email us:**  
**dns@gov.mt**

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*Newsletter  
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**Kindly let us know if your mailing details or the amount required have changed so that you will be able to receive this newsletter.**

**Your comments are greatly appreciated.**

Kindly send all correspondence to: -

**The Link, Department of Nursing Services Standards  
Fafner House, 2nd Floor,  
National Road, Hamrun HMR 9011**

or email us on [dns@gov.mt](mailto:dns@gov.mt)

Tel No: 2122 3336 or Fax No: 2122 3337