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### GUEST EDITORIAL

#### From research into practice to practice development: FoNS and the *IPDJ*

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As this is the final issue of the journal for 2017, FoNS' 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, I thought I would use the opportunity to reflect on how FoNS has evolved alongside practice development and the success of the *IPDJ*.

FoNS' first strapline 'Putting Research into Practice' reflected the early purposes of the organisation: to spread research findings and to embed research evidence into practice. There was a clear desire to achieve these aims and to make a significant impact on nursing, so our activities were geared towards engaging with nurses and supporting them in practice, education and academia to use research and evidence rather than simply spreading information.

The work of FoNS was gaining momentum at the same time as practice development was evolving. While references to practice development can be traced back to the early 1970s, it was during the 1980s that it began to make its presence felt, influenced by the seminal work of key nursing leaders such as Alan Pearson (1983) and Sue Pembrey (1989). As FoNS became more established, it made links with organisations such as the National Institute for Nursing, which was leading research to develop a conceptual framework for integrating nursing research, development and practice (Kitson et al., 1996). The evidence-based practice movement was also becoming more widely acknowledged. However, its uptake and use remained tentative, not least because the approaches to implementation continued to be top down and linear, based on the arguably unrealistic assumption that nurses and others would naturally draw on evidence and change practice. Promoting ways to break down the barriers impeding research and evidence use in practice was therefore a strong focus for FoNS at this time.

In 1998, the organisation forged a partnership with the practice development team at the Royal College of Nursing to support the delivery of its practice development schools. This partnership offered FoNS greater exposure to the growing knowledge based underpinning practice development, as work to define it more clearly began to accelerate. McCormack et al. (1999) published a conceptual framework along with a definition drawn together from their own practice development experience, the views of participants on residential practice development courses, educators and researchers. The definition described practice development as:

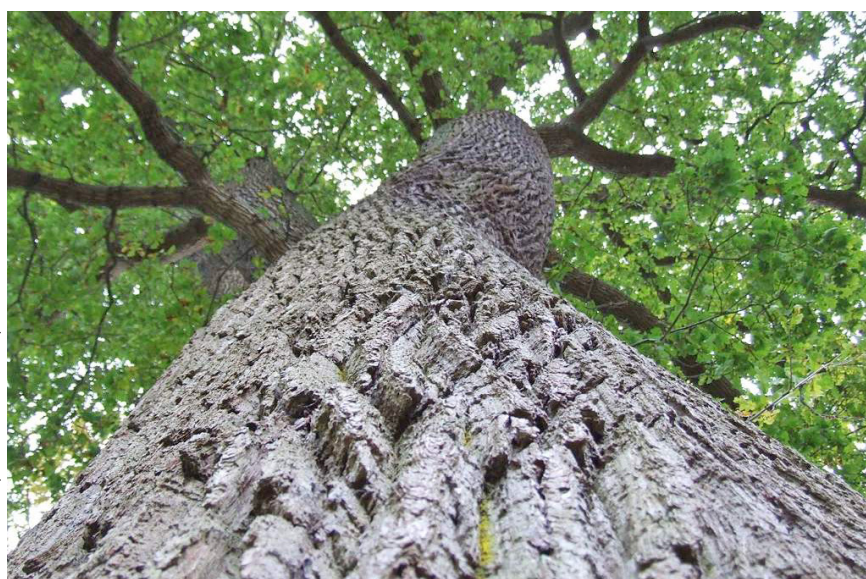
*'A continuous process of improvement towards increased effectiveness in [person]-centred care, through the enabling of nurses and healthcare teams to transform the culture and context of care. It is enabled and supported by facilitators committed to a systematic, rigorous and continuous process of emancipatory change'* (McCormack et al., 1999, p 256).

The arrival of the new millennium saw growth in practice development activity and its literature base, which in part prompted us at FoNS to reflect on and review our work and strategy. The original strapline no longer seemed to reflect what we were wanting to achieve, so a new phrase was adopted: 'Developing Practice Improving Care'. The partnership between FoNS and the RCN was also developing, leading to our involvement in the creation of a Practice Development Colloquium (later to become the International Practice Development Collaborative, IPDC) – a cooperative inquiry of practice developers, practitioner researchers and educators who made a commitment to expand the theoretical base for practice development.

Through this work, the earlier definition was refined (see McCormack, Manley and Titchen, 2008, p9) to emphasise that practice development is not simply a process for change and improvement, but is also a methodology for enabling the transformation of individual and team practices and the development of person-centred cultures. Arguably there are many tried and tested ways to approach practice change, but all-too often they focus on the change itself. Where the context and culture is supportive such strategies can be effective, but more often than not this is not the case. Approaches like practice development that make a commitment to working with persons and culture are needed and can add value to any existing service or quality improvement activity (Shaw, 2013). Indeed, it could be argued that this is even more important given the current challenges faced by health and social care, in particular the unprecedented stretch on resources and growing pressure on those supporting service provision and providing care.

In 2010, FoNS launched a new 'Centre for Nursing Innovation', a virtual space that aimed to reach out to nurses and staff across health and social care, and to spread knowledge, experiences and resources that support practice development. The growing evidence base for practice development being generated via our practice based research and improvement programmes gave rise to a further ambition for this new era – the development of a high-quality journal. Our partners in the IPDC shared this vision and desire to spread emerging knowledge. So in June 2011, in association with IPDC and with the support of Professor Jan Dewing, our founding academic editor, we launched the first issue of the *International Practice Development Journal*, an online, peer-reviewed, open-access, international publication that is free for authors and readers. Alongside publishing scholarly work that promotes understanding about the theory and reality of practice development, the journal encourages and enables clinical practitioners to flourish as writers and share how they are improving nursing, health and social care practice.

Seven years on, I looked back to the editorial for the first issue, which shared an image and haiku that represented our vision for the journal:



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Growing scholarship  
Innovate, create, flourish  
Person, culture, care

Like the tree, with its strong branches and lush green leaves, we now have a thriving, high-quality publication achieved through the hard work and professionalism of the editorial team. The *IPDJ* is also an exemplar of the strength to be found in collaboration and partnership working, a key principle of practice development and an approach that has helped FoNS achieve a great deal over these 30 years.

This journal is arguably one of FoNS' greatest successes and I join the team in looking forward to sustaining the unique approach that continues to benefit authors and readers alike.

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