During our 60-year history, the College’s consistent top academic rankings have been buoyed by our faculty’s research. Our focal areas are cancer prevention and survivorship, health informatics and, the spotlight of this newsletter, integrative health. What is integrative health? Simply put, it’s the practice of blending conventional and complimentary care to enhance both patient care and self-care for our future nurses. Integrative therapies like meditation, reflexology and acupuncture have existed for centuries, but we’re examining them anew through the lens of science. As the global focus on integrative health continues to expand, we’re on the forefront of that frontier. In this issue, you’ll read about the second cohort of our first-of-its-kind Integrative Nursing Faculty Fellowship, our partnership with a new assisted living community with an integrative focus, and one professor’s examination of the health benefits of a traditional Diné (Navajo) healing ceremony.

Joan L. Shaver
Professor and Dean

Whole-Person, Whole-System Health

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In the Presence of Horses

There’s a life lesson here: it’s not about you,” Barbara Rector tells residents gathered on a veranda at The Hacienda at the River, the latest assisted living community in the Watermark Retirement group. Behind her, a pair of horses await the morning’s therapy session. “Approach carefully, respect boundaries and be patient,” continues Rector, the director of the equine therapy program. “The experience brings you outside yourself for the needs of another being.”

That caring philosophy extends beyond the horse corral to every facet of life at The Hacienda. Thanks to a new partnership with the College of Nursing and its Integrative Nursing Faculty Fellowship (INFF), the Hacienda will be a unique environment where nurse faculty can practice and nurse students can learn relationship-centered, whole-person care that inspires optimal health and wellbeing.

Other integrative therapies offered at The Hacienda include aromatherapy, reflexology, acupressure and acupuncture. All of it is geared toward encouraging a personal wellbeing for residents that resonates physically, spiritually and emotionally. The attention to detail benefits the day-to-day wellbeing of the residents, but it’s also part of a larger discovery initiative that draws on the College’s integrative health expertise.

The Hacienda’s facilities will be a ‘living laboratory’ for the College of Nursing. “We will be assessing how integrative care therapies affect the quality of life of the residents,” says Dr. Deborah Williams, the liaison between the College and Watermark. “Nature heals. And I know it changes the students’ thinking, too. They no longer think medication first. It brings a whole new perspective of what it means to holistically care for a person.”
Second Cohort of Integrative Nursing Faculty Fellowship Attracts National Membership

When the second cohort of the world’s only Integrative Nursing Faculty Fellowship (INFF) kicked off its second year this spring, it was a bigger, bolder and more ambitious enterprise. It expanded from 11 participants in its inaugural year to 23 in 2017, with faculty represented from eight institutions nationwide.

“I am honored to be a part of bringing integrative nursing to our students and community,” said UA Clinical Associate Professor Megan Munson, who was one of 11 first-year fellows to graduate from the program. “The INFF has given me the language to share my understanding of integrative nursing and the confidence to be bold and share what I have learned with faculty, staff and students.”

Funded through the generous support of The David and Lura Lovell Foundation, the INFF program educates and prepares nursing faculty to transform nursing education using the fundamentals of integrative health.

“Integrative nursing is a whole-person, whole-system approach to health and wellbeing,” said Dr. Mary Koithan, the Anne Furrow Professor of Integrative Nursing at the UA College of Nursing and director of the INFF program. “Increasingly, patients and their families are demanding that health-care providers be knowledgeable about the full spectrum of treatments that can make them healthier, including less invasive ones. This trailblazing fellowship prepares faculty to transition nursing education to meet these evolving demands and our emerging integrative health-care systems.”

“I am excited to learn more about integrative approaches as part of caring science and how to bring it into the curriculum,” said Dr. Marlene Call, an INFF fellow and instructor who teaches pre-RN licensure programs at Augusta University College of Nursing. “I believe bringing caring and compassion into a curriculum with a strong evidence-based foundation can produce strong, competent, compassionate nurses.”

The Healing Power of Ceremony

Now in the final stages of a two-year research project, Dr. Michelle Kahn-John is assessing the effects of a traditional Diné (Navajo) healing ceremony on individuals suffering from emotional distress. She intends to make a case for expanding the role of traditional healers/practitioners in American Indian health care and tribal settings and bring recognition to the value of traditional Native American healing and ceremonial approaches to health and wellbeing.

Tell us about your research project

We’re exploring symptoms of emotional distress and stress-related inflammation before and after a traditional Native American ceremonial healing intervention, present for centuries within the culture. We are seeking culturally congruent ways to impact the Native populations’ experience of increased rates of mental health conditions, including depression, emotional distress, trauma and suicide. Overall, the intent of this work is to enhance the health and wellbeing of native communities.

Can you share your inspiration for this project?

In my nursing practice I’ve seen individuals who have sought Diné traditional healing and have found very effective paths to healing and recovery for their emotional and spiritual distress. During my 22 years as a nurse, I’ve focused on patients who have serious depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, complex trauma, anxiety and chronic and severe mental illness. Typically, we offer them standard Western treatment: counseling, medications, group therapy and family therapy, and those approaches are mostly helpful and effective. But I really wanted to explore combining those treatments with the healing potential of traditional practices – an approach we call integrative.

What is particularly unique about this approach?

I recognize that healing ceremonies are sacred to native people. Ceremonial processes are held in high regard by myself, the Hataałii and Diné. Some may question the intent of assessing outcomes of ceremony within a research agenda, but my intent is to enhance the health of the Diné by exploring the outcomes of ceremonial practices which have been present for hundreds of years. My approach is careful and respectful and therefore we will not share the specific elements of the ceremony, but will focus on outcomes of the ceremony.

How does this project relate to integrative nursing and health?

Integrative nursing principles are congruent with the philosophy of Native American healing and ceremony. The Diné healing ceremony addresses the complete patient, their body, mind, spirit, family and environment and places them at the center of a healing intervention. As nurses and healers, it is critical that we expand our awareness and knowledge of the multiple paths leading to health and wellbeing.
In mid-July, eight Master of Science for Entry to the Profession of Nursing (MEPN) program students completed their first clinical rotations at The Hacienda at the River. With a focus on independent living, assisted living and memory care, the goal at The Hacienda is for residents to advance their personal wellbeing in ways that resonate with physical, spiritual and emotional health. The approach matches perfectly for a partnership with the College of Nursing by providing a unique opportunity for students to see how integrative therapies can become a larger part of their practice. Over four days, students immersed in new therapeutic experiences, such as physical therapy and equine therapy.

Along with engaging in the usual health-related assessments, over four days students immersed in new therapeutic experiences, such as physical therapy and equine therapy. According to their faculty coach, Dr. Kimberly Shea, “The administration and staff made sure we formed solid relationships and engaged in meaningful learning opportunities.” In tune with the UA College of Nursing partnership with the National Hartford Center of Gerontological Nursing Excellence, the experience wrapped up with several students indicating strong desire to work in such an environment. “That's really nice,” says Dr. Shea, “because older adult care is an area for which skilled nurses are in high demand.”

**Student Views of their Experience:**

**Yvette Eason**
I had some idea of integrative health in terms of nutrition and meditation, but I hadn’t been exposed to the therapies at The Hacienda, like hand massage, guided imagery or equine therapy. I felt apprehensive about how the residents would respond to some of the therapies, but they’re actually really open and enjoyed what we did for them.

**Sherry Nguyen**
I really like the way they're incorporating alternative therapies rather than just going the pharmacological route. And the use of animal therapy was inspiring. Amazingly, I actually witnessed one resident drop his blood pressure by 30 mm Hg by just being in the presence of a horse.

**Yaralyn Romero**
Learning to incorporate therapies like mindfulness, guided imagery and therapeutic massage into the care that I was giving was really valuable. I also appreciated the emphasis on self-care for staff, because compassion fatigue and burnout are an important issue in health care.

**Taylor Valdez**
Within a medical environment, using a holistic approach to healing typically does not go beyond therapeutic communication; being able to go beyond was invigorating. Working in memory care, I engaged in therapeutic equine sessions with the residents. This proved to be truly remarkable in the promotion of health. As I move forward with my nursing education, I will certainly take with me the therapeutic and evidence-based practices I have learned as an approach to hasten healing for my patients.
The Arizona Nursing Inclusive Excellence Project, seeded by a new $1.99M, four-year grant from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, is designed to attract and support the success of students (pre-nursing, beginning and advanced nursing degrees) from diverse settings and cultures that are under-represented in health care. Culturally congruent with the needs in Arizona, emphasis is on Hispanic/Latino and Native American Indian students. Directed by Dr. Mary Koithan, associate dean for student support and community engagement, project features include focused mentoring, summer intensives, student financial aid and community partnerships.

“I’ve learned that nursing is so much more than just monitoring the patient. It’s important to hear the voice of the patient, help them have control of their care, and play a role in healthy habit promotion and disease prevention outside of the clinical setting.”

Melanie Begaye
MEPN Student

Share a Wildcat Nursing Memory

Email us at news@nursing.arizona.edu with a fun memory (and a photo if you have one) from your time at our College. For our 60th anniversary, we want to highlight as many of our 7,500 alumni stories and photos on our social media as we can.

Be Social With Us! Share what’s happening in your life on our social media sites.