



Editorial

Profiles in Family Nursing Leadership: Dr. Chieko Sugishita

Family nursing has become a worldwide movement led by visionary nurses who have provided leadership through their efforts to (a) value families as important in nursing care, (b) develop family nursing concepts, and (c) create infrastructures to support and promote the scholarship of family nursing. Dr. Chieko Sugishita is honored for her leadership and dedication in promoting family nursing in Japan.

Dr. Sugishita graduated from the University of Tokyo in 1966 and was licensed as a Registered Nurse and a Public Health Nurse. Her primary work in family health began in 1971 as a research assistant of the University of Tokyo. Early in her nursing career, she conducted epidemiological surveys of the effects of vaccination for preventing infection between mothers and babies. For many years she taught family health care as a lecturer, and in 1992 she became a professor of the Department of Family Nursing at the University of Tokyo. Her program of research across several populations has ranged from infection control between mothers and babies through breastfeeding to stress and coping of family members who care for an elderly family member experiencing severe dementia. She has a strong belief that all life events have the potential to affect family health and well-being. She also has a strong belief about unique cultural context in Japan that influences families and nursing care.

In her leadership role as professor of the Department of Family Nursing at Japan's most prestigious university she carefully developed a strategic plan for promoting the nursing of families. She launched the *Japanese Journal of Research in Family Nursing* in 1994 to provide a forum for scholarship and dissemination. She followed the peer-reviewed journal with the creation of a national association. On October 1, 1994, she organized and chaired the first national meeting of the Japanese Association for Research in Family Nursing. This important association and annual meeting provided a national infrastructure for collaboration and scholarly exchange between family nurse researchers, educators, and practitioners. The association was recognized as one of the earliest nursing associations to be officially enrolled in the Japanese scientific academy. Current membership of the association is more than 1,000 and still growing.

Dr. Sugishita's interest in extending family nursing led to her interest in Family Systems Nursing and the work of the Family Nursing Unit faculty at the University of Calgary. She sponsored and organized several family nursing workshops throughout Japan conducted by Dr. Lorraine Wright and Dr. Janice Bell. In 2000, she translated the book *Beliefs: The Heart of Healing in Families and Illness* (Wright, Watson, & Bell, 1996) into Japanese. That same year she also published a Japanese textbook of family nursing for undergraduate students.

Dr. Sugishita is no stranger to the impact of illness on families. She has suffered from chronic illness and its side effects for many years. Together with her husband and two sons, her family has struggled together to live alongside this life-threatening illness. Stories about her determination and perseverance to build a community of family nurses, despite her illness, persist. For example, she completed the translation of *Beliefs* from her hospital bed where she was being treated for a brain infection that caused paralysis.

Dr. Sugishita is still in the process of recovering her health, but she continues to significantly influence family nursing in Japan. She has nurtured a large community of researchers and teachers, and continues to meet with young academics to discuss the future and share her dream. Her outstanding contribution to the development of family nursing in Japan will be recognized and honored at the 7th International Family Nursing Conference in Victoria in June 2005.

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