



## Editorial

### Distinguished Contribution to Family Nursing Award

**Dr. Perri J. Bomar for: *Promoting health in families: Applying family research and theory to nursing practice* (1989, 1996, 2004)**

### Tribute to Dr. Perri J. Bomar offered by Janice M. Bell, RN, PhD

Dr. Perri Bomar began her nursing career as a maternity nurse and worked with childbearing families. During her graduate studies in the early 1970s, she was encouraged to focus her research on health promotion with African American women, and as a non-tenured professor in the 1980s, she became interested in health disparities in this population when chronic illness such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes arose. She was part of a task force of faculty who created a new family nursing program in the late 1970s at University of Akron and was instrumental in strengthening the family nursing program at University of San Diego, where she taught family nursing and mentored many graduate and doctoral students in family nursing research and health promotion independent projects. This work led to an invitation, with encouragement from a colleague, to write a nursing textbook that married the ideas of family nursing with health promotion.

Perri reports that she initially felt like an imposter. Who was she to write such a book? Could she blend these two areas of research and knowledge? Would there be a market for such a book? Her first edition was published in 1989, and there was enthusiastic acceptance of her ideas and those of her contributors who persuasively argued that families-including their rituals and routines-are at the center of health promotion. This work was recognized with the *American Journal of Nursing* Book of the Year Award in 1989, and *Nursing Outlook* also recognized her textbook with a Book of the Year Award. She couldn't believe that her modest ideas would have such an impact! Family health promotion is now used by nurses in the United States, Canada, Japan, Thailand, and other countries. The uniqueness of family health promotion is recognized, and she has given presentations in the United States and internationally. For example, in 2004 Perri gave a presentation on family health promotion to students and faculty at the Iwate Prefecture University Faculty of Nursing in Japan.

Across all of her editions of *Promoting Health in Families*, Dr. Perri Bomar has invited a group of distinguished contributors and graduate student mentees who argue persuasively and intentionally that families *do* conserve wellness in a variety of ways across the lifespan, across cultures, and across the health-illness continuum. Across three editions, what have been so satisfying for Perri are the comments from faculty about their appreciation for the usefulness of the ideas she has offered, but especially satisfying have been the comments from students who have said that the textbook not only helped them with the families they worked with but also changed their own families for the better as they more consciously nurtured their own family health promotion efforts. Even psychologists and sociologists at various universities are utilizing Perri's textbook.

For the past 10 years, Perri has been the associate dean research and community partnership and professor at the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW). She was hired for a mission: to create and direct a master of science in nursing program in

family nursing. This program was accredited by the National League for Nursing before the first class graduated (Bomar, Hessenflow, & Hisley, 2000). She has also been successful in writing numerous grants to fund and sustain a rural nurse-managed primary care and wellness center, of which she has been the director since 1998. Named the Bolton Health and Wellness Center, this rural nurse-managed center serves as a site for UNCW faculty and graduate students to increase the capacity of families in health promotion. Perri also has an ongoing program of research on spirituality and hypertension (Bomar, Kemppainen, & Compeau, 2005) and on spirituality and cancer among African Americans (Bomar, Noel, Johnson, & Hamann, 2006). As an African American nurse, Perri has been instrumental in modeling the value of graduate education and mentoring many students who have sought her guidance and support. A number of her graduate students have progressed to doctoral studies with a focus on family or health disparities in underserved populations. Her most recent research is focused on describing and developing family nursing interventions that incorporate community-participatory research methods using evidence-based research focusing on self-management, spirituality, and the rural environment to improve health promotion with African American families. Who knew where the proposed marriage of family nursing and health promotion would lead Perri? We are very grateful for her distinguished contribution to our field.

Janice M. Bell, RN, PhD, *Editor*

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