

Holistic Nursing: It's Time Has Come

By Susan Luck, RN, BS, MA, HNC, CCN

Over the past few years, the Integrative Health movement has grown in popularity in Medical Centers and teaching hospitals throughout the country. Research now shows that tools and techniques such as relaxation, imagery, massage, biofeedback, and mindfulness meditation can lower blood pressure, improve glucose metabolism, and promote a sense of well being. Holistic practices are being driven by consumers demanding options to our current medical model. Many of these modalities are compatible with our nurse practice guidelines. They are non invasive, supportive interventions for prevention, and for enhancing the healing process.

A growing number of RNs are learning more about integrating healing, holistic practices into their own lives to cope with stress as well as how to offer these modalities to their patients in diverse work settings.

Holistic nursing embraces a philosophy inherent in the roots of nursing as a healing art. It is part of nursing care although new tools can be learned to bring to enhance patient care and promote the healing process.

The qualities inherent in a holistic nurse include, presence, caring, intentionality, and connection with the patient. Each individual is viewed as a whole: body, mind and spirit . Holistic nursing can be practiced even when time is limited as it is more about the quality of the interaction more than the quantity of time available.

The American Holistic Nurses' Association (AHNA) defines holistic nursing as one that "embraces all nursing practice that has healing the whole person as a goal." Holistic nurses can practice in any setting, from hospitals to private practice.

Another vital aspect of holistic nursing is self-care. As nurses work in a highly stressful environment, they often forget the need to take care of themselves. The way that nurses learn these skills and use them in their clinical practice is through implementing them first into their own lives, says Aurora O Campos, Clinical Holistic Nurse Specialist at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York. As a nurse, she integrates several modalities into her clinical care at the hospital including healing touch, massage, imagery for preparing for surgery, and aromatherapy. Aurora O Campos has been teaching these modalities to nurses through the Integrative Nurse Educator Certificate Program at the New York Open Center in New York City. For more information contact: www.opencenter.org

Many holistic nurses go on to become independent holistic health practitioners and health educators and find many new doors opening once they follow this expanded nursing direction. Some work in collaborative practice with physicians, and other integrative providers. The opportunities are endless when nurses begin to explore this path as witnessed by many nurses creating programs in their communities and healthcare institutions.

Information and resources:

- **“At the Heart of Healing: Experiencing Holistic Nursing”** an interactive self paced learning program in holistic nursing. 18 continuing education credits from critical care For more information: www.holisticdvd@aol.com
- American Holistic Nurses Association website at: www.ahna.org or call 1-800-278-AHNA