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HISTORY OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

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The public health nursing program in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Public Health (UNC-CH SPH) celebrated its 50th anniversary in November 1990. In 1995 with the formation of a Public Health Nursing Section of the SPH Alumni Association, it is time to reflect on its origin, mission and accomplishments and renew commitment to the future. The program owes its existence to nurses in North Carolina who believed in such a program and fought for its creation. This article traces the history.

Data for the first decade came principally from the University Archives. Annual Reports of the School, first written in 1950, provided additional data, as did selected interviews, correspondence and department files.

THE EARLY YEARS

In the early 1900's, poor sanitation, malnutrition, poverty, unwanted pregnancies and communicable diseases prevailed throughout the rural South including North Carolina despite the efforts of the few public health workers. The Rockefeller Foundation, recognizing a need for a training ground for public health workers, established a training site in 1916 to serve as a model for local health departments. Dr. Benjamin E. Washburn, a North Carolinian, was selected as Director and established a site in Wilson, North Carolina. The project was very successful and Dr. Washburn moved up to the State Board of Health to set up county health departments based on his model throughout the state. There, he convinced the Board to submit to the University of North Carolina a tentative proposal to "help train desperately needed health officers and public health nurses." (B.E. Washburn, 1919) Unfortunately, the plan did not materialize for lack of funds.

Due to the great depression of 1929, unemployment increased and the work of public health nurses became more demanding. Because of the overwhelming needs, both state and federal aid were invoked.

Several other events influenced the development of the nursing program. Many federal agencies were providing funds for the employment of nurses impoverished by the depression. For instance, in 1933, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration began funding home nursing care of the unemployed sick who were receiving Federal aid. The Civil Works Administration provided money to states for the salaries of unemployed nurses and mandated that these nurses work primarily in official public health agencies. To care for the nation's mothers and children, the Children's Bureau provided salaries for 2500 previously unemployed nurses. These acts created an unusual situation, as large numbers of nurses, the majority of whom had been private duty nurses, were drawn into public health work without prior experience or education for the task. (Gardner, 1955) To help alleviate the situation, the Social Security Act of 1935 provided funds for the education of nurses in the field of public health work.

Dr. Carl V. Reynolds, state health officer for North Carolina, 1934-48, realized that there was no training center in the South to meet the growing demand for public health workers. He believed that the Social Security Act would lend a helping hand in establishing a center. He, upon learning of Dr. Milton J. Rosenau's retirement from Harvard's School of Public Health in 1935, traveled immediately from his office in Raleigh to Chapel Hill to talk with the Dean of the Medical School of UNC-CH, Dr. Charles S. Mangum. Dr. Reynolds realized that an invitation to start a training program in public health in the state would have to come from the Dean of the Medical School. He challenged Dr. Mangum to invite Dr. Rosenau to develop a public health

program. "Hell's Fire. Shoot at the moon and you might hit it!" (Reynolds, 1962) Dr. Mangum surrendered and risked a three cent stamp. Dr. Rosenau expressed interest and came to Chapel Hill.

Dr. Rosenau, "Father of Preventive Medicine", was named Director of the newly created Division of Public Health in UNC's two-year medical school in 1935. Doctors, engineers and sanitarians were given courses in public health work. Social Security provided the support for the Division.

As soon as Dr. Rosenau was in office, nurses and directors of public health agencies of North Carolina began requesting courses to prepare nurses for public health service and education. In January 1936, Dr. Rosenau wrote: "We recognize that public health nursing is one of the important links in any sound program of public health administration and are keen that this be done." (School of Public Health Records, UNC-CH Archives) The chief reason for not providing courses for nurses was lack of personnel willing to teach such courses. Requests continued for public health nursing education led by efforts of the North Carolina State Health Department and Nurses' Association. Demand for public health education for other categories of workers also increased. The University responded by converting the Division into a separate School of Public Health in 1940. Dr. Rosenau was named Dean.

Believing that public health nurses should be educated in a school of public health, Dr. Rosenau immediately began to recruit a public health nurse educator who would develop and conduct a nursing program. With the assistance of United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Regional Nurse Advisor, Mary Dunn, and members of the North Carolina State Health Department and Nurses' Association, several qualified candidates were identified. Ruth

Warwick Hay of the Faculty of the Department of Hygiene, University of California at Berkeley, was selected. A Department of Public Health Nursing was created. In November, 1940, Ruth Hay was appointed Professor and Head of the new department at an annual salary of \$4,000 for nine months. She was the first woman professor appointed to the UNC-CH faculty. (Hay, 1959) She was instructed by Dean Rosenau to select her own faculty. Margaret Blee, from the same California faculty, was selected and appointed Assistant Professor in February 1941 with a salary of \$3,000 for nine months. Pearl McIver, Senior Nurse Advisor of USPHS, was appointed Lecturer.

The University, shortly after the faculty were appointed, approved two programs; one for the Bachelor of Science degree in Public Health Nursing (BSPHN) and the other, a Certificate in Public Health Nursing (CPHN). The first class of 36 students was admitted in the fall of 1941.

The difference between students in the two programs was that the BSPHN candidates had prior college education in contrast to CPHN candidates who lacked that qualification. Both groups took the same courses in nursing and public health sciences together with master's students in the other four departments of the school. Two quarters of academic work were followed by a third quarter of field work in an approved training center. Three students graduated from the nine-month program in 1942 with a BSPHN degree and fifteen received the CPHN.

As Social Security funds could not be used to support students in an unaccredited nursing program, Dean Rosenau and Ruth Hay requested the National Organization for Public Health Nursing (NOPHN) to make an early visit for accreditation purposes. The annual budget for the program of \$11,100 was deemed adequate. On June 4, 1941, NOPHN granted full accreditation

to the new program permitting the first students to graduate from an accredited nursing program. Since then, the program has been continuously accredited by NOPHN and its successors except for a four-year hiatus in the 1960's between the phasing out of the baccalaureate program and the accreditation of the master's program in 1970.

Social Security funds and stipends from state health departments provided a steady pool of applicants although World War II created enrollment problems for the entire school. The two faculty members were paid for the first three years from federal funds channeled through the State Health Department. Venereal Disease funds paid Ruth Hay's salary and Childrens' Bureau money paid Margaret Blee's. After that the University assumed responsibility for the nine-month appointments. Both faculty taught short courses in the summers for additional income.

After the war, enrollment picked up so that the quota of 45 students was reached for several years. About 25 qualified applicants were on waiting lists. In an effort to assist nurses who were working full time to earn the necessary credits for the Merit System Classification of Junior Public Health Nurse, which required four nursing courses in an accredited program, Hay and Blee taught classes in 1949 in Charlotte and Greenville, North Carolina. Travel, however, consumed so much time that after the first two programs were completed, courses were offered only on the UNC-CH campus on Saturdays.

When the war ended in 1945, the Department began to assist the North Carolina College for Negroes (NCCN), in developing and achieving national accreditation for a public health nursing program. UNC-CH SPH faculty traveled to Durham and taught the same courses as were taught public health nurses on the Chapel Hill campus. Accreditation of the NCCN program by NOPHN was achieved in 1949. The formal joint arrangement between the two schools ended in

1956, but the Chapel Hill faculty continued to teach there for another seven years at which time segregation was outlawed and black students were able to enter the SPH. (Miller, 1988)

By 1950, the pool of unprepared nurses was becoming smaller so the University began removal of the Certificate program, the last CPHN being given in 1961. There were more and more requests for a master's program in public health nursing supervision and administration.

Students fondly remember those years and the many Kaffe Klatches and Hogan Stew served by Blee and Hay in their home, Dun Roaming. (SPH Archives) Many outstanding nurses came to the campus during the summers to teach short courses with Blee and Hay. The other departments in the SPH were becoming stronger and new ones were added, thus enriching the nursing students' experiences.

THE ENERGIZED 1950's

After the war, the federal government began providing large amounts of money for social programs in agencies. The SPH had a new dean, Dr. Edward G. McGavran, well known for his expression, "The Body Politic." The SPH became a recipient for several expanded programs. One was a five-year grant by USPHS to develop a master's program for public health nurses in administration and supervision. Margaret B. Dolan, a North Carolina native and a graduate of the BSPHN program, was appointed to the faculty in 1950 to develop and teach in the new program. Two students were admitted in 1951 and were awarded the MPH degree. The MPH program continued and is still offered.

Additionally, there was money for short courses throughout the 1950's, 1960's and early 1970's. Stipends were available for participants and faculty by means of USPHS short-term

training grants. The faculty conducted numerous short courses throughout North Carolina and in other states.

The Department's first national workshop was held on campus in 1956 at the request of NLN for public health nurse educators, the "Talk Shop," which resulted in NLN Exchange 13. Twenty years later, in 1976, the Department began offering an annual short course for public health nurse educators. The course today attracts up to 200 participants from all parts of the United States.

The State Board of Health requested the Department in 1956 to teach orientation courses for nurses entering public health nursing. The arrangement lasted ten years at which time the program was transferred to the UNC-CH School of Nursing. The Department then began to assist the state health department with annual short courses to prepare nurses for supervision, an arrangement that is still in existence.

A ten year research study, well publicized through numerous presentations and publications, was funded by USPHS, starting in 1958. Mrs. Ann Hansen directed the study, "Essentials of Public Health Nursing Field Experience" followed by a "Study of Decision-Making in Public Health Nursing."

Another memorable event of that decade was the passage of the Nurse Training Act in 1956. It, together with subsequent legislation, has provided innumerable traineeships to students up to the present.

Margaret Dolan had great impact on the Department and School. In the 1950's she served on boards and committees of state and national public health and nursing associations and in the next decade was President of the American Nurses' Association (1963-65) and President

of the National Health Council (1968-69). She was also President of the American Public Health Association (1972-73).

THE 1960's: A GOLDEN AGE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

This was the era of John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society, the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, womens' demands for equality, Medicare and Medicaid legislation. Growth in the SPH was on the rise and research became a heavy emphasis. "Soft money" was easier to obtain to support new initiatives. An internal cost analysis in the School revealed that teaching a graduate student cost \$2,643, an undergraduate \$1,504, and a non-degree student \$546.

New faculty were added in the Department. Among them were Betty Edmands, Marion Highriter, Marie Lowe, Marie McIntyre, Beatrice Mongeau, Virginia Nelson, Barbara Stocking and Julia Watkins.

The Department closed the baccalaureate program in 1962. Since 1942, 235 BSPHN degrees had been awarded. The profession was stating that specialization for nursing should be at the master's level. With this closure, there was a threat to the Department's survival, but Margaret Dolan's national visibility kept students enrolling.

Plans for a joint teacher preparation program were developed with the School of Nursing. A five year USPHS grant was received to develop and conduct a Master of Science degree program with a major in public health nursing. Margaret Shetland was appointed as Professor and Director of the program in 1963. Upon her resignation two years later, Marie McIntyre was named Director and remained in the position until her retirement in 1980. After eleven years of

joint administration, the University transferred the program to the Department of Public Health Nursing, where it was headed by Sandra Koerber and later by Marilyn Asay.

The Department also undertook international work. The SPH, with the Agency for International Development, had a five-year contract with the Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand. As part of the contract, a public health nursing program was to be developed. Department faculty traveled to Thailand, and several Thai nurses graduated from the Department's MPH program in Chapel Hill. One Thai nurse earned her doctorate in the Department of Health Administration and became head of the public health nursing program at the School of Public Health in Bangkok.

This decade provided the Department with eight new faculty and money for new initiatives. Enrollment remained high, but winds of change were blowing.

EMPHASIS ON PRACTICE: THE 1970's

The 1970's were very different from the preceding decade. There was run-away inflation, Watergate, President Nixon's resignation, and the Iran hostage problem. The country was turning against the entitlement programs of the Great Society. Great emphasis was placed on minority programs. Federal funds were less plentiful for public health work.

A new dean was appointed in the SPH, Bernard G. Greenberg. His immediate emphasis for the faculty was giving service to the people of North Carolina, but at the same time conducting research and teaching. Minority recruitment was the second emphasis. The Department of Public Health Nursing had a large student body to teach and multiple workshops to conduct for nurses in the State. There was little time for research, nor was there outside

funding for such an activity. Morale was at a low ebb due to Margaret Dolan's terminal illness and death in early 1974.

An occupational health nursing master's program was started in 1972 by means of a five-year training grant from the National Institute of Occupational and Safety Health. It was developed to prepare nurses for work in occupational settings. Irene D. Courtenay was the Director until her resignation in 1975; she was replaced by Cynthia Houston-Brickey. The program has been continuous, with faculty not only teaching and doing research, but conducting many national workshops. M.E. Bonnie Rogers is the current Director. In a related development, in 1982, a contract was awarded by the Division of Nursing, USPHS, to prepare an "Educational Program to Increase Nurses' Skills Related to Environmental Health." Charlene Ossler started the project which was completed by Bonnie Rogers.

Virginia Nelson served as Deputy Chair of the Department from 1972 to 1974. At that time, Dorothy M. Talbot was appointed Professor and Chair of the Department, coming from a similar position in the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in New Orleans. Also in 1974, Nora Cline transferred with her students from the Mental Health Department and continued that program until her retirement in 1978.

With Medicare legislation in 1965, home health agencies proliferated and the demand for bedside care in the home increased. The "nurse practitioner" came into being the same year in Colorado. North Carolina, being a poor rural state, was a prime place for this type of nurse. In 1971, the Schools of Nursing and Medicine and the Department of Public Health Nursing developed a joint program designed to prepare nurse practitioners for work in the understaffed rural health centers. The program was based on a pilot program in the eastern part of the state

which was staffed by a nurse practitioner from another state and conducted in an old tobacco barn. (Brooks, 1988) The new program was directed by Marie McIntyre, later by Julia Watkins, and discontinued in 1978 when the School of Nursing developed a master's program that encompassed nurse practitioner training. There was then less need for the non-degree program.

Qualified minority nurse faculty applicants were in short supply nationally. The Department Chair was cautioned that probably no new faculty would be appointed until such applicants were found. Extensive recruitment efforts were made with limited success.

Faculty were pushed to the limit with teaching and conducting workshops for nurses in the state, yet there was the never-ending expectation for research production. Little outside money was available for nursing research per se. Despite this, each of the faculty was conducting one or more studies during this period. Judith Joseph Adams joined the faculty in 1977 to strengthen the research component.

It was during the 1970's that the profession placed great emphasis on faculty practice and the use of the clinical areas as classrooms. Handling a public health nursing caseload seemed impossible with the other demands and the faculty felt guilt. Norman dePaul Brown was added to strengthen the practice component. Finally, they came to realize that working with students in practice settings and providing technical assistance and consultation to nurses in the field was "practice."

A non-residential program leading to the MPH degree with a major in public health nursing was started in 1976 in the eastern part of the state and another one began in 1980 in the western part. On campus faculty from the SPH traveled once a week to these sites. Students attended class one day a week for three years and had the same program as students on campus.

These programs continued through 1994. New approaches (summers on campus or telecommunication) for meeting the needs of practicing North Carolina nurses are currently being assessed.

The Margaret Blee-Ruth Warwick Hay award was initiated in 1977 to honor a student annually who is chosen by the faculty and classmates as having the most potential for public health nursing leadership. The award carried with it a plaque and check for \$200. Money for it comes from a fund that was discovered at Ruth Hay's death. She had willed a small life insurance policy to the Department.

Another event occurred in 1978 when Nancy Tigar joined the faculty and began rebuilding the administration component of the program which had been in abeyance since Marie Lowe's resignation in 1974. But the decade was filled with faculty retirements with few replacements because there was no "soft money" from research grants to support positions and there was a dearth of minority applicants. Yet student enrollment remained high with 35 to 45 in the classes. Service to local health departments was strong and there were multiple workshops. The "science-oriented" departments, such as Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Environmental Science, had large grants. The "service-oriented" departments had few. The strain of threatened funding cutbacks was constant.

MORE FEDERAL CUTBACKS FOR HEALTH: THE 1980's

The 1980's brought a myriad of new public health problems: environmental contamination, AIDS, Alzheimer's disease, family violence, homelessness, teenage pregnancies, drug problems and an aging population. Federal cutbacks for health-related programs were extensive.

A new dean, Dr. Michel A. Ibrahim, was appointed in 1982. His chief emphasis was research, all the while maintaining quality teaching and service activities. In December of that year he announced that the Department of Public Health Nursing would be restructured following the expected retirement of the Chair, Dorothy Talbot, in 1984. He believed that the complex public health problems demanded interdisciplinary study. Nurse faculty, working with members of other disciplines, would be able to generate more research and grant money and the student program would be enhanced. The National Center for Nursing Research was still four years in the future. A multi-disciplinary task force was appointed by the Dean to advise him on a new structure. The recommendation was that the Department become a Curriculum, an organized entity already existing in the University. University policy precluded faculty joint appointments within departments in the same school. By changing the administrative structure, nursing faculty could have appointments in other departments, and faculty of other departments could have appointments in the Curriculum.

Change is not easy. There was considerable turmoil, and protests were made over the decision, led by nurses in the state and nation, in particular, public health nurses. The change was viewed as a lowering of status for nursing. In the summer of 1984, however, the Department was restructured as a Curriculum upon Dorothy Talbot's retirement.

Marion Highriter served as Acting Chair of the new Curriculum during the two-year search for a Chair. There were few faculty and students because of uncertainty over the new program's direction. Mary Harris had an interim faculty appointment during this critical transition period. A new educational program was designed by faculty from other departments

and the School of Nursing, together with alumni and the remaining faculty in the new Curriculum. As rebuilding began to take place, student enrollment began to increase.

In 1986, Marla E. Salmon, from the School of Public Health, University of Minnesota, was appointed Chair of the Curriculum. Maija Selby was appointed at the same time to strengthen the research component. Research became a key emphasis of the program, enhanced by the creation of the National Center for Nursing Research, April 1986, which was able to provide funds for nursing projects. Recruitment for students was undertaken. New faculty, staff and graduate assistants were appointed. Computer assistance was provided the faculty. There was jubilation when NLN gave the new program full accreditation in 1987 for eight years. Rachel H. Stevens, well known in public health nursing in the State, and Deputy Chair for Administration under Marla Salmon, was appointed Chair in 1992 when Dr. Salmon became Head of the Division of Nursing, United States Public Health Service, in Washington, DC. Tenure track faculty appointed during this period were Jan Atwood, Vangie Foshee, Jean Norburn and Mary Peoples-Sheps. The program was reaccredited by NLN in 1995.


Students today may matriculate for either the MPH or MS degree program in public health or occupational health nursing with functional emphasis in administration, education or practice. In addition, there are suboptions in gerontology and school health.

Considerable change has taken place in the program since its inception in November 1940. Yet there has been a constancy of purpose -- to provide public health nurses with the tools needed for effective leadership and practice in community settings. The program continues to keep pace with graduate education in general; there is, furthermore, pride among the graduates of

the school and participants of the multiple workshops. It is their support that fuels the efforts of the faculty today to stay on the cutting edge of public health nursing education.

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