

Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing

news release

Nursing Receives Prestigious WHO Redesignation

September 21, 2009—Reflecting its leadership role in disseminating nursing expertise for the benefit of all, the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing (JHUSON) has earned the World Health Organization's regional Pan American Health Organization redesignation as a collaborating center for nursing information, knowledge management, and sharing.

Of the 46 nursing programs worldwide that are WHO collaborating centers, JHUSON is the only one with information and communications technology (ICT) as its focal point. Overall, WHO has 800 collaborating centers in 90 countries, covering such areas as occupational health, communicable diseases, nutrition, mental health, chronic diseases, and health technologies.

PAHO director Mirta Roses Periago, MD, expressed "deep appreciation" for the JHUSON center's contributions and said that she looks forward "to our successful collaboration." The redesignation runs through August 2013 and can be further renewed. It follows JHUSON's initial designation in 2005.

Patricia Abbott, PhD, RN, FAAN, FACMI, co-director of JHUSON's Collaborating Center for Knowledge, Information Management, and Sharing, said that the WHO redesignation recognizes the center's being "way, way out in front of the curve" in harnessing ICT to improve the exchange of health information.

"The world is moving toward understanding the power of information technology in health," she said. "JHUSON figured out early on that there'd be a surge in ICT and health. The WHO has concomitantly begun to harness the power of IT in health. With our expertise in that area, and our extensive, world-wide nursing outreach, JHUSON is very well positioned to capitalize upon the changing global landscape."

JHUSON's collaborating center already has made impressive contributions in sharing its expertise with nurses, midwives and other medical professionals abroad, including by tailoring its packaging of information to the limited bandwidth capabilities in many developing countries. More than 2,000 medical professionals from 136 countries are active in JHUSON's Global Alliance of Nursing and Midwifery (GANM), where they share best practices and network electronically. Abbott serves as GANM's moderator.

"Hundreds of exchanges have been facilitated by GANM," Abbott said. She mentioned a primary care physician in Diyala province, Iraq, who sought advice on addressing a measles outbreak under combat conditions; respondents included retired American nurses who had served in Vietnam. In another instance, health workers serving the Inuit population in Canada's Northwestern Territories were advised by nurses in Bolivia on how best to work with indigenous peoples.

"I'm looking at it, thinking, 'These people never would have met otherwise, and the knowledge in our heads would not have been shared with those who need it the most,'" said Abbott. "For me as a nurse, it's been incredibly rewarding and humbling. It opens the channels of communication- all of a sudden, geography becomes irrelevant, we are able to reach out, share our knowledge for the good of people all over the world"

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The Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing is a global leader in nursing research, education and scholarship and is ranked fourth among U.S. nursing schools. Our community health program is second in the nation, and the nursing research program now holds seventh position among nursing schools securing federal research grants. The School is recognized for its reputation of excellence in educating nurses who set the highest standards for patient care, exemplify scholarship and become innovative national and international leaders in the evolution of the nursing profession and the health care system. For more information, visit <http://www.nursing.jhu.edu>.

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