

Interdisciplinary
Nursing Quality
Research Initiative

**Midwestern State University Awarded \$299,953 as Part of National Effort to Study
Link Between Nursing and Patient Care**

Research Team to Study the effect of off-peak work environments on nursing care.

September 5, 2008. Wichita Falls, Texas—Midwestern State University has been awarded \$299,953 over the next two years to research ways to improve nursing care. The grant is part of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Interdisciplinary Nursing Quality Research Initiative (INQRI), a \$19 million program that will generate and disseminate research showing a link between what nurses do and the contributions they make to advancing better and safer care for patients.

The grant will enable a team of researchers, led by Dr. Patti Hamilton, the principal investigator and nurse researcher, to understand the differences in nurses' work environments at night and on weekends to better assess the impact of these differences in patient care delivery systems. For 30 years, researchers have studied the impact of weekend and night shift differences on patient outcomes. By interviewing nurses at Medical City Dallas Hospital and a hospital site in Houston and by examining hospital policies and procedures that frame patient care practices in hospitals, the researchers will explore aspects of these nurses' work environments to determine differences during night and weekend hours that could impact patient outcomes.

“The majority of nursing care in hospitals is delivered outside of the Monday through Friday work week; however, we know little about how the care is delivered ‘after hours’” says Hamilton. Studies have shown that cardiac arrests and deaths are more likely to occur on nights and weekends, and we are hoping that interviewing front-line care givers will help us understand the difference in the hospital environment on night and weekend shifts.

Nurses account for more than half of all health care providers in the United States. However, little research exists to demonstrate the link between what nurses do and the effect of those interventions on patient care and safety. INQRI will fill the gap by applying rigorous science to expose that link.

“It takes a nurse to make a difference in the quality of care we get in hospitals, but if that nurse is overworked, under-motivated or lacks adequate support to keep patients healthy and safe, we all suffer,” said INQRI director Mary Naylor, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N., Marian S. Ware Professor in Gerontology at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing.

“Without evidence linking nurses to better patient care, their contributions often go unrecognized. This study helps to supply that evidence.”

The interdisciplinary research team also includes Drs. Gretchen Gemeinhardt, a health care administrator; Sondip Mathur, an economist at Texas Southern University; Teresa Walsh, a nurse at Texas Woman’s University; and Marie Campbell, a sociologist and Professor Emeriti at University of Victoria, Canada. June Marshall, MS, RN, NEA-BC, the Director of the Center for Nurse Excellence at Medical City Dallas Hospital serves as a member of the research team and liaison to the principal investigators for implementation of the project at Medical City. Nancy Nardelli, RN, CRCC will serve as the study coordinator for the project at the Medical City site.

“This important study affords nurses at Medical City the opportunity to communicate with these researchers about specific “real world” differences in night and weekend work environments that may impact patient outcomes in complex healthcare environments such as ours,” said Marshall. “Our ultimate goal in this project, as in everything we do, is to provide safe, efficient, effective care for the patients we serve.”

“By funding interdisciplinary research, we expect this program to improve the safety, reliability, quality and efficiency of healthcare practiced in the United States,” said Lori Melichar, Ph.D., senior program officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

“This project will determine nursing actions that impact quality and will help transform the way health care is delivered,” said Mark Pauly, Ph.D, the Bendheim Professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School and co-director of the INQRI program.