

## Editorial: Paul N Bennett

### In this issue

Bennett, PN.(2008) Editorial: In this issue. *Ren. Soc. Aust J.* 4(3) 73

This issue is the biggest issue of the Renal Society of Australasia Journal since we first published 4 years ago. This issue consists of three original articles, two book reviews, one guest editorial and one educational supplement.

Experienced home dialysis nurses, Ali Blogg and Cheryl Hyde, present the results of their ethnographic study where they explored the complex experiences of spouses caring for people on home dialysis. Their results provide an improved understanding of some of the tensions and burdens that spouses experience enabling clinicians to better prepare and support spouses.

Sandra Campbell, Michelle Woods and Judy Sankey provide us with a review of the status of chronic kidney disease in Australia, examining how the primary health care framework can be incorporated into the nursing care of people with chronic kidney disease.

Because many of us work mainly in the tertiary acute care sector this article provides a necessary understanding of the primary health care aspects of kidney disease.

The article by Adams and Bonner was originally written to describe research into an issue that has frustrated many of us: when to weigh patients pre-dialysis. Throughout the research and writing process the research hypotheses were rejected, but important and valuable research and clinical experience was gained. If you are considering undertaking a research project in your unit then this may be an important article for you to read.

Our guest editorial has been written by John Boyle. John is a psychologist who has presented around Australia helping nephrology nurses cope with working under stressful working conditions. He has provided us with some thought provoking advice on looking after ourselves.

Kirsten Black has come on board this year as our continuing education author. This issue features an update on anticoagulation in haemodialysis. In addition we have included book reviews from Peter Sinclair, Jacqui Moustakas and Tanya Smolonogov.

If you have any photos that you think are appropriate for the cover of the RSAJ please email to me for consideration.

Finally, thank you to all the above contributors, industry supporters and RSAJ editorial board members who have made the publication of the RSAJ possible. I look forward to receiving more and more high quality contributions in 2009 from RSA members.

Cheers

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## Guest Editorial: John Boyle

### Nurses looking after self

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The opportunity to pollute the minds of innocent nurses (sic) with my ill-conceived unthought-out opinions could not be passed up if I am to live up to my *raison d'être*, that the world is entitled to my opinion, no matter how gibberish it is. The issue I wish to address is, "How do we support and encourage nurses to look after themselves with the same dedication they are prepared to invest in others?"

Am I the only one who finds it bizarre that nurses are more dedicated to caring for sometimes unappreciative people than they are to looking after themselves? And why am I interested in nurses? I am interested in the second question because my sister in Edinburgh is an oncology research nurse, and I know the personal cost of such a caseload, be it in oncology, renal, or so many other areas of health care. The answer to the first I will try and explicate.

Your chosen career path is incredibly meaningful, and unless closely monitored, dangerously draining of your personal resources, your energy and your capacity to enjoy life, of which work is a significant chunk and should therefore be a major source of happiness. Is it?

So, dear reader, why is this the case, that nurses are self neglectful? I believe that it is because they fail to function as adults.

## Guest Editorial: John Boyle: Nurses looking after self

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Does that read as heresy? I include myself in that category (self neglectful, not nurse).

Ok. Put your hand up if you have ever gone into work, feeling like death, not looking as good as death, probably still infectious, coughing, sneezing, spluttering, all over the ward with the intention of soldiering on because "If I am not there my already dangerously overstretched colleagues will be overwhelmed due to my selfish absence because of this minor illness that would kill a normal human being?"

Let me remind you of Boyle's Law that you may have heard when I have presented nephrology nurse workshops

*Every single human being on the planet has the inalienable right to stuff up their life in the manner of their own choosing, timing, and design as long as it doesn't stuff up mine. Defend the right! stuff up your life.*

Boyle's Law: The Second.

*There are some rights we have but it doesn't make sense to exercise those rights, like tap dancing in minefields with clogs on, poking angry bulls in the bum with a pointy stick when drunk, (you drunk, not the bull) or continuing to behave in ways that adds to the burden of illness in the community that you are supposed to be committed to reducing.*

Which brings us rather neatly, and somewhat provocatively I hope, to my main thesis, that it well nigh impossible to get human beings to be self responsible, i.e. to function as adults.

Ask yourselves, "What is my definition of adulthood?" "What is yours John?" I hear you think. I look for in adults what I don't expect to find in children. I do not expect children to be terribly good at self care, self management, self responsibility,

self motivation, self correcting, self comforting, self love, etc. I do expect adults to be constantly striving to achieve their adulthood, in existential terms, and to paraphrase, we are all in the process of becoming adults.

Is it hard to get people to be self responsible? How often have you spent ages explaining something to a person in detail, the need to follow instruction carefully, to take the medication as directed, or not to continue with certain behaviours, only to find your words have all the impact of truth in politics. Nada. Seventy percent of people will abandon their anti depressants in the first thirty days, seventy percent will abandon their Statins in the first twelve months despite their undoubted efficacy in preventing heart attacks, strokes, etc. The momentum of life, the demands of running families, relationships, paying mortgages all conspire to see us cut corners in our personal welfare, but if you keep running your body into the ground that bit of ground becomes known to all and sundry as your grave.

So, what is it to be, adulthood or immaturity, resulting in a premature and soggy final resting place? How often do nurses fail to attend pre arranged conferences or lectures whose function is to enable you to do your job better because they couldn't get away from the hospital or renal unit? Everyone, everything takes precedence over the nurse.

You have heard me say it before, if you can't care for yourself you will be inadequate to the care of those closest to you because you will simply not have the energy to meet your obligations there. How often has a nurse said to me post relationship fracture "I didn't see it coming."

"Why didn't you see it coming?"

"Because I was never there, or if I was there I was not fully psychologically emotionally present. Sex? Oh yes I met my obligations, once a year and that about holiday time, if I took them." "It sounds like your partner must have felt very special to you." (Sound of smack on head in therapy room, it never fails to make me feel better.)

Be responsible and accept the responsibility of managing your own wellbeing as at least equal to the wellbeing of others. Nurses are a limited and precious commodity in any community because they strive to make better. If only that were within the arc of intentionality of all in our society.

I would prefer that as a body the profession of nurses would see the scales fall from their eyes and in an eternal moment of insight have the epiphany that sees them model the self care they wish for in their charges. Whatever you decide to do, don't do what makes the situation worse. You can always count on human being to relentlessly do what makes the situation worse, imperfect creatures that you are and always will be.

### **My thesis and challenge to you stands.**

In relation to your own health, your own care and relationships, nurses fail to behave as psychologically and emotionally mature healthy adults, because they are not. That at least they have in common with the other earthlings. Prove me wrong, and there is a standing prize of one million Zimbabwean dollars.

I think I will finish now because I have to go and look after myself.

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### **Author Details:**

Mr John Boyle graduated in 1975 with a B.Sc. (Hons.) in psychology. He is a member of the British Psychological Society, the Australian Psychological Society, and is registered with the Victorian Psychological Council.