

Dublin City University

February 26 to March 14, 2013

Sabbatical – Karen Devereaux Melillo, PhD, ANP-C, FAANP, FGSA

Submitted 5-13-13

Dr. Kate Irving, Convener/Head of Research, Dublin City University School of Nursing and Human Sciences, and Dr. Karen Devereaux Melillo, Professor and Chair, UMass Lowell School of Nursing, have collaborated since February 2011 via videoconferencing on potential nursing research involving the psychosocial well-being of older adults. Dr. Irving also runs the Memory Works Clinic at the Healthy Living Centre, Dublin City University. This collaboration culminated in this international visit to further our mutual interest in cognitive health and early retirement research and practice activities, while having an opportunity to be hosted by Dublin City University.

I was asked by Dr. Gerard Moore, Head of School, to provide a doctoral research colloquium on Evaluation Research: Use of the Logic Model, as the School of Nursing and Human Sciences is exploring and developing knowledge of evaluation-based research. This colloquium was well attended and positively received by faculty and graduate students in nursing, counseling and psychotherapy, and psychology. I was also able to attend the doctoral research colloquia of others. I co-facilitated a Thesis Supervision/Master's graduate research seminar for students in the process of their Master's thesis completion with Dr. Kate Irving.

Dr. Irving's research involving memory disorders and cognitive health allowed me a first-hand opportunity to observe the assessment of clients attending the Memory Works Clinic at DCU. Furthermore, mental status evaluation and screening for community-dwelling older adult recruitment in an aerobic exercise intervention and cognitive health research study were completed, and I was able to actively participate in an intergenerational class focused on cognitive health that was offered to community elders – a major focus of DCU to engage members of the community in research and learning-based activities.

Dr. Irving and I have received notice of DCU Research Ethics Committee preliminary approval of a qualitative proposal on our mutual area of research interest - subjective experiences of early retirement on cognitive, emotional and physical health, memory complaints, and well-being following incentivized, non-planned early retirement of public service employees that began February 2012 for the 55-64 year-old age group. We will obtain collaborative IRB approval from UMass Lowell, and conduct two focus groups of 6-8 participants each. Qualitative data analysis of this pilot research is expected to result in a further research proposal to funding bodies and conference proceedings for a cross-national study. The qualitative study findings of the pilot research will be submitted to an academic, peer-reviewed journal.

In my meeting with Dr. Gerry Moore, Head, School of Nursing and Human Sciences, I learned the detailed history of DCU and the SNHS, while advancing my own knowledge about nursing education in Ireland. We shared in discussions about the promotion and tenure processes and guidelines for faculty at DCU and UMass Lowell. DCU describes their School as “at the forefront of Nursing, Health, Counselling and Psychotherapy and Psychology education, practice and research” (DCU website). I was offered the opportunity to meet with and observe nursing faculty in the teaching of nursing fundamental skills laboratory, as well as an arts-based and humanities lecture on developing interventions for individuals with disabilities.

According to the An Bord Altranais [Irish Board of Nursing] *Annual Report 2009* (p. 27), “there are over 68,000 registered nurses and midwives in Ireland. This number comprises men and women who trained under the traditional “apprenticeship” system, those who completed a pre-registration diploma in the period 1994-2001 and those who since 2002 have undertaken the four-year honours bachelor degree programmes provided by schools of nursing and/or midwifery in the higher education sector”.

I learned of the challenges and opportunities in Nursing in Ireland when all of the country moved their diploma model of nursing education to University-based, and then were confronted with the need to provide for the PhD educational preparation of diploma-prepared nursing faculty in the process. This effort began in 2002, and has resulted in the graduation or enrollment of a majority of the nursing faculty in PhD programs at DCU. DCU maintains very close affiliations with nurse educator liaisons at the area hospitals and long-term care facilities, which are committed to providing the clinical education experiences needed to graduate nursing students.

DCU also arranged for my participation in an off-site clinical experience in long-term care nursing. I spent a day at both St. Mary’s Hospital in Phoenix Park (built in 1769 and originally was the Royal Hibernian Military School, developed as a hospital by the Irish Army and in 1964, became a facility for ‘dependent older persons’) and Phoenix Point. I met with nursing administration, nurse managers, nurse educators, and toured the facility and resident rooms. We had the opportunity to interact with the residents and direct care staff about their role in and appreciation for care of older adults.

The DCU nursing administration, faculty and staff, and students were most gracious in their warm reception throughout my visit. It was an honor and a privilege to conduct this international travel to Dublin City University as part of my Spring 2013 sabbatical, and I am grateful to the Center for Irish Partnerships for the stipend which assisted in defraying the travel costs associated with this sabbatical research activity.