“A NEW SPECIES OF NURSE”

The Establishment of the Infection Control Nurse in Ireland

Ruth Geraghty, Martin McNamara, Gerard Fealy
UCD Irish Centre for Nursing & Midwifery History

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Sources

7 individuals from the first cadre of infection control nurses in Ireland

Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method

Articles from 1970-1990
Precedents ...from Torbay to the ICNA

1955  Colebrook recommendation of COI
1959  British Ministry for Health, Central Health Services Report
1959  Gardner, Stamp, Bowgen and Moore
1962  ‘The Infection Control Sister: A New member of the Control of Infection Team in General Hospitals’ (The Lancet, October 6, 1962)
1966  Taunton conference
1969  Contact first edition
1970  ICNA officially formed
1979  ‘Foundation course’ receives official accreditation as JBCNS329
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Centralisation of the laboratories of the FDVH</td>
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<td>1971 - 1972</td>
<td>‘Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus’</td>
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<td>(Conor T Keane, Rosemary Hone, The Lancet, March 16th 1974)</td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>Babs Kerrison, Adelaide Hospital</td>
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<td>1975 - 1980</td>
<td>Further appointments</td>
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<td>1976 – 1984</td>
<td>Gentamicin resistance</td>
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<td>1980s</td>
<td>Blood borne viruses</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td>HIV AIDS</td>
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<td>Mid 1980s</td>
<td>Regional hospitals, specialist populations</td>
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Entry into role

“they had taken chunks out of an English, American and Canadian job description ... what they thought looked good and they lumped them together ... The more I went through it the more I was laughing, and they asked me what did I think was so funny and I said, ‘well I don’t know who this person is going to be but obviously you are going to get in touch with Superwoman’”
Entry into role

“talking to surgeons and theatre sisters and that kind of thing can be a bit daunting if you don’t know what you’re talking about in the first place so I reckoned that would be my biggest hurdle”
Entry into role

“most of my interview was on my interaction with people and how I would relate to people and if there was a problem, how I would deal with that kind of thing”
Training and initiation

“ I can’t emphasize enough the steep learning curve I think all infection control nurses go through in their first year. It is mind blowing ... and you’d always have people who love to catch you out as well. So you’re going to meetings and you’re frantically trying to get a baseline on it that you won’t make an eejit of yourself ”
Training and initiation

“suddenly I got all these questions, quite bizarre questions, people would ring you about a bird’s nest in an office”
Training and initiation

“every time I stepped outside of my office everybody gave me these monstrous problems, huge, huge problems”
Training and initiation

“[I remember] getting a phone call to tell me that somebody had painted one of the theatres with cydex and they had to evacuate the ward. I came up the corridor and I’m having an asthmatic attack practically at this stage ... I was faced with, ‘oh my God, what do I do?’... So I rang [other ICN in other hospital] ... and basically the neutraliser was vanilla essence ... I had to get my porters to don protective respirator equipment, I evacuated the entire theatre and the day ward, and I turned the ventilation onto expeller and then I got them to paint the whole place with vanilla extract (laughs) and it worked”
Working with Microbiology

“ You’ve got to love the bugs ”
Working with Microbiology

“when you see Aspergillus on a plate it really is a wonderful organism ... it means something to you”
“a few of [the lab techs] were not seeing a sick person, not seeing patients in the bed because they are remote, they feel removed. And some of them felt quite faint when I brought them up to the intensive care unit. They’d see people on ventilators and the sample from the ventilator tubing ... So they could say, ‘yes I know what you’re looking for, I know there is a person, there is consequence if this is contaminated’ ”
Lines of authority

“... [the director of nursing] would have preferred if I reported in to her much more often which I felt was kind of a waste of time really ... I just felt she was inclined to try and keep the reins on me, I think that’s what it was really. And it just doesn’t work like that”
“... they sort of looked at me quite blackly as much to say ‘what?’. I came to a surgical ward and the ward sister there told me in no uncertain terms that she didn’t know what infection control was, but whatever it was she didn’t need it, she had no infections on her ward, never had infections on her ward and didn’t plan to have any, and that people like me could be well done without; that there was better things to be done”
Negotiating of access

“... the nun who was the theatre superintendent used to follow me around the theatre blessing each theatre with holy water after I vacated it, and she had this sort of mantra, I had a beard at the time, ‘... they come snaking in and they haven’t even the decency to show their faces, they have to hide behind beards’ and she’d be muttering this as I went through”
Negotiating of access

“ I was a new species arriving and it was great to have the microbiology result to say, ‘well a patient had a particular organism that we need to investigate’ ”
Becoming the ‘heaven sent expert’

“...everybody thought you were an expert and certainly when I started there was this notion, initially, of keeping your head down because none of the chairs of the hospital want the appointment, consultants were like, ‘what do you want appointed?’ and then, ‘oh no, no, they all want to see you’”
Becoming the ‘heaven sent expert’

“During that time I remember I was heavily involved. I educated the whole hospital; from the porters, the cleaners, the domestic staff, the NCHDs, the nursing staff. That’s what I did a lot of the time and you did that continuously to try and keep people reassured that they weren’t all going to get infected”
Conclusions: The ICN, a new species of nurse

“...the very title ‘infection control’ meant that you were meant to be controlling the infection but in fact we have no control, all we can do is empower other people to take control and to educate them as to how they can manage their cases better”
Contributors, special thanks to...

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Further information on this project

See our website at: www.ucd.ie/icnmh

Contact me at: ruth.geraghty@ucd.ie
tel: 01 716 6466