

# PREFACE

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The fundamental aim of nursing practice is to promote people's health and to provide excellent and sensitive care to individuals and families. As science, technology, and the demands of the public for sophisticated health care become increasingly complex in the late 20th and early 21st century, it is essential that the empirical underpinnings of nursing practice be continually built and strengthened. In order to accomplish this goal in the most efficient manner, the nursing profession labored to place its federal research and research training programs in the mainstream of health and biomedical sciences at the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

In response to that effort, Congress created the National Center for Nursing Research (NCNR) at the NIH in 1985, thereby establishing a prestigious structure where the science undergirding nursing practice could flourish, and where nursing would have significant opportunity to collaborate with its colleagues in the diverse health sciences.

By virtue of being the federal focal point for nursing research at the NIH, the NCNR is endowed with the mantle of national leadership. In confronting the challenges of that mandate, the NCNR launched the National Nursing Research Agenda (NNRA) as one of its critical initiatives.

The purpose of the NNRA is to develop depth in the science underlying nursing practice. Such depth is achieved by focusing considerable effort and resources on research in areas of high importance to the public's health. The specification of a series of research priorities promotes the most efficient development of the knowledge needed for nursing practice.

In 1987, NCNR began an extended and continuing series of activities to establish the NNRA:

- A subcommittee of the National Advisory Council for Nursing Research was formed and charged with providing policy guidance for the development of the NNRA.
- An invitational conference was convened to obtain the profession's input into the NNRA by their specification of a set of priorities.
- Panels of experts were convened in each proposed priority area to assess the state of the science in the area and to make specific recommendations.
- Some of the recommendations of the expert panels were translated into requests for applications and program announcements.
- Applications in these areas of priority were received, reviewed, and funded.

This volume represents the report of the NCNR staff and the NNRA Steering Committee. It introduces the series and acquaints the reader with NCNR's philosophy, the process used to develop priorities, the implementation of the priorities, and plans for their evaluation. Each future report will communicate one expert panel's description of the state of the science in its area of interest; view of the critical research opportunities for nursing; and recommendations for the nature of the research to be supported by NCNR.

The NNRA Steering Committee and NCNR staff look forward to the next ten years of development in the science of nursing practice, and urge the reader to address the challenges of promoting health and ameliorating disease and disability inherent in the National Nursing Research Agenda.

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[TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

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