

International Practice Development Journal

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Looking back: moving forward

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It was back in September 2010 at an International Practice Development Collaborative (IPDC) meeting that the idea to explore the development of an online journal for practice development came to the fore. From my point of view, creating a journal was something I had felt FoNS should be considering, in part as a vehicle for disseminating the outcomes from our improving practice programmes. However, it was not something we could have achieved in isolation. Following the meeting, a small subgroup of IPDC members, including Jan Dewing, Sally Hardy and Brendan McCormack, met with Kate Sanders and me to flesh out the aims and aspirations for the journal and to identify the next steps.

Our overarching aim was to create a space for publishing work around both the theory and practice of practice development. The early aspirations focused on producing an internationally recognised, professional and academically credible, peer-reviewed journal that would offer free publication for authors and free access for readers. Making it an online journal increased opportunities for creativity and flexibility in terms of production while retaining a professional style. There was also a strong commitment to creating dialogue, so space for readers to comment on articles was seen as important, along with offering genuine support to novice writers.

FoNS was seen as the right home for the journal. We had space within (at the time) our new 'virtual' Centre for Nursing Innovation and the board of trustees was willing to provide the resources to support the journal's launch and development during the early years. All this brought great enthusiasm from IPDC members, who lent their support by joining an international editorial board and facilitating the submission of articles.

With commitment and enthusiasm, the FoNS team was able to forge ahead with the practical work of setting up the *International Practice Development Journal*. While we knew there was much to do, we probably underestimated just how much was involved. This was new territory for FoNS and we quickly realised that publishing houses are not keen to share processes – they are businesses after all. However, with our 'can do' mentality we, and in particular Kate Sanders, pressed ahead tenaciously with everything from creating job descriptions for various roles, including that of academic editor, to copyright agreements, author guidelines, processes for peer review and so on. Along with getting those sound structures in place, it was also important for us to develop processes that lived the values of person-centred ways of working. We were determined that authors should have a supportive experience, from initial submission through to publication. The feedback received from numerous authors over the years testifies to the journal team's success in achieving this.

From a FoNS perspective, the journal has been an enormous success. I believe we have a professional and credible international journal that everyone can be proud of and which is regarded with respect by other publishers. The credit for sustaining the journal in terms of quality goes in large measure to the editorial team but the contribution of our IPDC collaborators has been indispensable. Financially, we have worked hard over the nine years to trim our costs but the ability of IPDC member organisations – and going forward our additional partner, the International Community of Practice for Person-centred Practice (PcP-ICoP) – to make financial contributions has been important.

Publishing a journal has contributed to FoNS' profile nationally and given us an international presence that I don't think we would have achieved through other activities alone. As an aside, publishing the journal with partners has highlighted the collaborative way of working to which FoNS is committed. FoNS has always seen this way of working as a means to reach further and do more. Working with collaborators and partners is not always easy but doing so increases opportunities for success for all, and the *IPDJ* is a good example of this. As a registered charity working across the UK, there are limitations on where we can spend our money, but the activity we support and our resources have relevance to health and social care across the world. Hosting the *IPDJ* on our website means that authors and readers are exposed not just to the journal itself, but also to the wider work of FoNS.

As many readers will be aware, my time at FoNS has come to an end. In my last weeks, I had the pleasure of appointing a new academic editor, Dr Gemma Stacy. Gemma is taking up the role at a fantastic time and with a great legacy created by Professor Jan Dewing and the FoNS team including Kate Sanders, Debbie Warren and Jon Lalljee. This is a good opportunity to express my appreciation to them all. I know the team will continue to work hard and will support Gemma as she takes the journal forward.

So, what for the future? The *IPDJ* has many qualities that I think it is essential to maintain including:

- Commitment to quality publishing
- The values-based, person-centred approaches
- Free open access for authors and readers
- Support for novice writers
- Balance of theory and practice

There are also some areas I would suggest could be strengthened:

- Widen the scope – the focus on practice development was absolutely right at the start and is still important for contemporary practice. However, there are other approaches being used across health and social care to improve practice, promote learning in practice and enable culture change; the *IPDJ* could be richer for the inclusion of such work
- Expand partnerships – it is great to welcome the PcP-ICoP as a collaborator and I believe expanding this to other partners who share the values of the journal will increase stability and quality for the future
- Increase the appeal of the journal with students – nursing students and those from other allied health professional groups do look at the *IPDJ*, but might there be scope for expanding their engagement through greater connection with university programmes? Additionally, could the journal attract students as authors, perhaps by launching a dedicated space?

Finally, along with all the work at FoNS, being part of the *IPDJ* has been a great pleasure and I reiterate my thanks again to the editorial team, board members, IPDC and PcP-ICoP. I wish FoNS and the journal continued and growing success.

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