

Stay the Course

Dr. Linda Juretschke is JOGNN's 2007 Reviewer of the Year.

My recent conversation with JOGNN's 2007 Reviewer of the Year, Linda J. Juretschke, PhD, RNC, APN/NNP, CCNS, was filled with her commitment to expert clinical practice, dedication to lifelong learning and education, joy in the journey of the professional life, recognition of the need to embrace opportunity, and a positive view of nursing's future. As she summed it up, her message to other nurses is to "stay the course." Staying the course means perseverance during downturns, shortages, budget cuts, upturns, surpluses, and trends that come and go because the need for care goes on, and the satisfaction of caring for others as a nurse does not change. Dr. Juretschke believes that "I am proof positive that you can do all kinds of things with your nursing career, that you can keep it fresh and interesting." Let me tell you some of her story.

Dr. Juretschke's professional life in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) began simply without a great plan except to be an intensive care nurse. When she applied for her first nursing position as a newly minted BSN graduate in 1983 and asked for intensive care, the only available position was in neonatal. Because she had not enjoyed her pediatric rotation as a student, she accepted the position somewhat reluctantly. Under the mentorship of an exceptional preceptor who truly loved nursing and fostered the joy of clinical learning, Dr. Juretschke quickly became an NICU nurse who also loved her work. The rest of her story is founded on the serendipity of this first clinical position and the wise guidance of an experienced nurse preceptor. Her career has remained focused on the care of high-risk neonates.

The continuation of Dr. Juretschke's formal education was initially somewhat serendipitous when a certificate neonatal nurse practitioner (NNP) program was started in the NICU where she worked at Loyola University Medical Center. However, her decision to simultaneously earn her master's degree in nursing was a deliberate decision because she had

learned that advanced practice nursing roles would soon require graduate degrees. In more recent years, she returned to school once again earning her doctoral degree this past spring to provide the final preparation for the future of her career and the career opportunities the PhD provides. Her motivation for all her educational endeavors has been to equip herself more fully to not only provide and foster expert neonatal care but also open doors of career opportunity and leadership in health care for neonates.

Dr. Juretschke's passion for learning is clearly grounded in a love for the care of the smallest and most vulnerable patients. That is the central theme of her career. She believes that expert clinical practice cannot exist without the scholarship of practice, a concept that means the nurse is constantly refining knowledge in relationship to what is already known and done. Such consistent questioning of the way care is given leads to questions that require formal systematic study through research as well as quality improvement initiatives to bring the best existing evidence to the bedside.

Her passion for helping other nurses develop and expand their expertise led to the development of NICU Solutions, Inc. (<http://www.nicusolutions.com>), a continuing education and consulting company dedicated to promoting excellence in the care of premature and critically ill newborns. A business enterprise that she describes as a "mom and pop" operation (well illustrated by her neonatal respiratory therapist husband's contribution as vice president of the company and her three sons' assistance with the company mailings), this work is thriving by providing review courses for neonatal intensive care nursing certification and NNP certification in addition to other services.

Glimpses of Dr. Juretschke as a clinician were clear when I asked her about her most humbling and exhilarating experiences as a nurse. Her most humbling experience came in the words of a father who sincerely asked without anger or accusation, "Did my baby die because we are poor and cannot pay for care?" Although she was initially shocked that someone could even think that, this father's simple question has ever after helped her to view

everyone individually without prejudice. In contrast, her most exhilarating experience has been to see her very first patient as an NNP grow up in her own community into a strapping 6-foot tall high school junior. This young man was in the NICU for 7 months, suffered many serious complications including multiple cardiac arrests and the need for long-term respiratory support. Dr. Juretschke described him as an example of the hope in the NICU, how well babies can do and how well they can thrive.

In addition to Dr. Juretschke's wise advice to "stay the course," I gleaned the following lessons from her story:

- Clinical precepting is a critical and foundational professional responsibility in the development of nurses.
- Lifelong learning includes a multitude of formal and informal modalities from curiosity and inquiry on

the clinical unit, regular continuing education, and formal graduate education. Learning opportunities are abundant and all around.

- Career development is both deliberate and opportunistic.
- A clear view of the main point of one's work is needed to sustain a nurse through the ups and downs of health care.

Please join me in congratulating Dr. Juretschke for her selection as *JOGNN's* 2007 Reviewer of the Year and thanking her for her many contributions to expert neonatal intensive care.

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Editor