

EDITORIAL

‘Keeping our goal in mind’

With this issue the journal has a new blue cover. Also as you saw, The Network that sponsors this journal has a new name—‘The Network: Towards Unity for Health’ and a new logo. Thus, it is a new period for The Network: TUFH. This is an especially good time for the journal and The Network: TUFH to address again our overall purposes. At a recent meeting The Network: TUFH came up with the following statement of its purpose—‘The Network: TUFH is a global organization (ngo) in official relations with WHO. Its objective is to improve the relevance and performance of health service delivery systems to better meet people’s needs’. Thus, the overall purpose is expanded but not changed from its purpose as stated many years ago. In my words, that purpose is to help make health professions education more relevant to the needs of societies in which the graduates practice. As the journal’s name suggests our purpose is essentially the same—to focus on changing health systems by addressing the processes of education, research and service. It is to involve policy-makers and practitioners. It is to communicate various approaches that are working and to provide evidence of that fact.

We are doing many things to achieve this purpose. Among them, we have communicated with The Network: TUFH’s executive committee; we are proceeding with our proposal to get the journal listed in Medline; we have improved our relations with the publisher; we are considering the possibility of going to four issues; and, through various means, we get the viewpoints of our readers to continue to make the journal as useful to them as possible.

With regard to that last item, many of the readers find that the articles, the section entitled ‘Practical Advice’, and the editorial are the most helpful and that letters to the editor, interviews with students, the international diary, and selected abstracts are the least helpful. We have been thinking about topics for future issues of the journal. Some of them are curriculum design, health communications, public health, perceptions of community, interprofessional education, qualitative approaches to research that are of high quality, the relationships between education and practice, and evaluations of both programmes and students. Obviously the Practical Advice section is regarded as very useful. Perhaps you noticed that this issue and the one before it did not have the section ‘Practical Advice’. Due to difficulties we were unable to have such a section but be assured that future issues will have it. Also, for those of you who have access to internet, we are exploring the ways in which there could be more online access of the journal’s contents.

We are also addressing the issue of evidence. What evidence is there that community-based, problem-based education makes more of a difference than conventional schools in the way that graduates practice? About 4 years ago I was asked this question by a Minister of Health. It went something like this: ‘How do I and others know that CBE and PBL make any more difference than the schools that have departments of community sciences? You’ve had at least 25 years to work on this. Shouldn’t you have some data by now?’ Those are very good questions and they go to the heart of what this journal, and I hope and believe, *The Network: TUFH* is about—communicating evidence that CBE and PBL do, indeed, make a difference in the relevance of the health care system to the health needs of people. There are, of course, many questions to be answered. Choose one from my list or better yet, come up with one or more of your own! Here are a few of the ones that I have come up with: How, if at all, does the admissions process influence the graduates? How, if at all, does the curriculum make a difference—that is, how it is decided what will be taught, where it is to be taught and by whom? What are the roles that community members play, if any? How are faculty members rewarded? Does that matter? Do the ways in which the graduates practice differ from graduates of more conventional schools? If so, why? If not, why not? What is the relationship between the school and the policy-making body? Does that involve the school in policy? If so how? If not, why not? On what and how are students evaluated? On what and how is the programme evaluated? There are many, many more questions. In fact, it’s much easier to come up with questions than to answer them! As you can discern, our journal chooses its articles from that which is submitted to us. Thus, we can emphasize the importance of evidence all we want, but if manuscripts about evidence are not submitted, there will be nothing about evidence published. That, in a few words, is our problem! So help us out! In your manuscripts tell what you are doing (we and our readers like that!) But also tell us what evidence you have that the approach you have described makes a difference.

In order for us to be as useful to readers as is possible, thus far the journal has changed in only three ways. They are: a section of interviews with people from communities around the globe; commentary on the articles published in other pertinent journals and a publication of tables of contents rather than abstracts, and ‘News from *The Network: TUFH*’, a section that replaces the one that was entitled ‘Reports and Announcements’ in which, among other things, we will be publishing the position papers of *The Network: TUFH*. Also as of this issue we are pleased to inform readers that our book review editor is now Professor Marlene Viljoen, head of a South African Nursing school.

Overall, then, the journal is trying to respond to your needs. To do that we would, as always, welcome any comments from our readers, by email or otherwise.

Ronald Richards, PhD
 Editor, *Education for Health*
 E-mail: <richards@uic.edu>