Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for
a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and
private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without
the permission of the Author.
Professional Practice Attributes
Within
Public Health Nursing

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Philosophy
In
Nursing

At Massey University, Turitea
Palmerston North
New Zealand

Chiquita Hansen

2004
ABSTRACT

Modifiable organisational attributes that reflect a professional nursing practice environment are important determinants of both the experience of people who access health care services and the job satisfaction of nurses who work within health care organisations. Research relating to acute care settings, commonly known as the Magnet phenomenon has made an outstanding contribution to health sector knowledge by identifying features that attract and retain nurses, promote excellence in patient care, and achieve superior patient outcomes. These features have been studied by the Nursing Work Index Revised which measures attributes that reflect a professional nursing practice environment. More recently there has been an interest in the potential applicability of these attributes in the community setting. A recent study surveyed United States home health nurses and New Zealand district nurses to ascertain which of the Nursing Work Index Revised attributes were perceived by them as important to the support of their professional practice. In this study 92% of items previously tested in acute settings were considered important in community settings.

This descriptive study extends the previous work by investigating how another group of primary health care nurses in New Zealand (public health nurses) perceive the importance of specific organisational attributes within their practice setting. The Nursing Work Index Revised was utilised and participants were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with the importance and presence of 48 attributes on the Nursing Work Index Revised against a 4-point Likert scale. The findings of the study validate the use of the Nursing Work Index Revised as a tool in the community setting. The study's findings, implications for nursing practice, future research and the potential use of this tool to support the development of primary health care nursing in the New Zealand health sector is presented.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Once I never contemplated I would be completing post-graduate study, let alone writing a thesis. This has only been possible with the support of my family, MidCentral Health work colleagues and my academic supervisors. Firstly I would have ‘never survived’ post-graduate study without the commitment and positive encouragement of my husband Richard and my two daughters Ali and Ashley (who when I last really looked at them, were little girls and now have grown into beautiful teenagers). Secondly I would have never started post-graduate study without the support of MidCentral Health and my many work colleagues and friends, who have inspired me to ‘make it’. Thirdly I would have never completed this thesis without my two supervisors, Professor Jenny Carryer and Dr Claire Budge who have both supported and encouraged me to ‘keep going’.

"The secret of success is making your vocation your vacation"
Mark Twain.

I wish to acknowledge the public health nurses who took the time to participate in this study, Ann McNicol for her support in agreeing to be a contact for Maori nurses, and to Breast Screening Aotearoa for supplying me with blue pens. In addition I want to acknowledge the following people for the range of data sources provided to me in completing this study. Professor Linda Aiken for her United States hospital data (which was part of a survey funded by a grant - RO1NR 0228), Dr Linda Flynn for her United States home care data (which was funded by a grant from the American Nurses Foundation) and Professor Carryer and Dr Budge for access to their district nurses data.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................. i

Acknowledgements .................................................. ii

Table of Contents ................................................... iii

List of Figures ......................................................... vii

List of Tables ......................................................... viii

Chapter 1: Introduction ............................................... 1
  1.1 Background to the Study ........................................ 1
  1.2 Professional Practice Environment ............................ 3
  1.3 New Zealand Health Sector ....................................... 5
  1.4 Public Health ..................................................... 7
    1.4.1 Public Health Nursing ....................................... 8
  1.5 Primary Health Care ............................................ 12
    1.5.1 Primary Health Care Nursing .............................. 14
  1.6 Research Questions ............................................. 17
  1.7 Overview of Thesis ............................................. 17
  1.8 Summary .......................................................... 19

Chapter 2: Literature Review ........................................ 21
  2.1 Public Health Nursing ............................................ 21
  2.2 Magnet Hospital Studies ........................................ 24
  2.3 Development of the Original Nursing Work Index ........... 25
  2.4 Nursing Work Index Revised Development ..................... 26
4.2.2 Actual Attribute Ratings and Comparison to Ideal Ratings .................................................. 57

4.3 NWI-R Sub-scales .................................................................................................................. 61

4.3.1 Presence and Importance of the NWI-R Sub-Scales ......................................................... 63

4.3.1.1 Autonomy Sub-Scale ..................................................................................................... 64

4.3.1.2 Control Over Practice Sub-Scale .................................................................................. 65

4.3.1.3 Nurse-Physician Relationship Sub-Scale ..................................................................... 66

4.3.1.4 Leadership Sub-Scale ..................................................................................................... 66

4.3.1.5 Education Sub-Scale ..................................................................................................... 68

4.4 Summary ............................................................................................................................... 69

Chapter 5: Qualitative Results and Discussion ............................................................................. 70

5.1 Organisational Attributes not Covered by the NWI-R .............................................................. 71

5.1.1 Recognition of Speciality Practice ...................................................................................... 71

5.1.2 Resources .......................................................................................................................... 72

5.1.3 Networking ......................................................................................................................... 72

5.1.4 Education/Research .......................................................................................................... 73

5.1.5 Suggested Organisational Attributes .............................................................................. 73

5.2 Characteristics of Public Health Nurse Services and Support of Nursing Practice .................. 73

5.2.1 Leadership Category .......................................................................................................... 76

5.2.2 Orientation/Education Category .......................................................................................... 82

5.2.3 Support Category ............................................................................................................... 85

5.2.4 Recognition Category ......................................................................................................... 87

5.2.5 Quality Category ............................................................................................................... 89

5.2.6 Resources Category .......................................................................................................... 91
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Organisational attributes, not covered by the NWI-R, which public health nurses identify as being specific to the community setting 71

Figure 2. Characteristics that make public health nursing services a "good place to practice nursing" 74

Figure 3. How public health nursing services can support nursing practice 75

Figure 4. Public health nursing services characteristics and support features categories 75
List of Tables

Table 1  Number and percentages of public health nurses in each DHB region according to 2003 NCNZ statistics and participants' responses

Table 2  Public health nurses most highly endorsed attributes compared to the NZ district nurses, US home health and US hospital nurses

Table 3  Public health nurses' least endorsed attributes compared to the district nurses, US home health and hospital nurses

Table 4  Differences between reported presence (actual) and importance (ideal) for highly endorsed attributes

Table 5  Differences between reported presence (actual) and importance (ideal) for least endorsed attributes

Table 6  Differences between reported presence (actual) and importance (ideal) for remaining attributes

Table 7  Means, standard deviations and Cronbach's alpha scores for selected sub-scales of this study and other studies

Table 8  The actual and ideal percentage agreements, the difference between agreements of each attribute that makes up the autonomy sub-scale and the overall mean difference
Table 9  The actual and ideal percentage agreements, the difference between agreements of each attribute that makes up the control over practice sub-scale and the overall mean difference

Table 10  The actual and ideal percentage agreements, the difference between agreements of each attribute that makes up the nurse-physician relationship sub-scale and the overall mean difference

Table 11  The actual and ideal percentage agreements, the difference between agreements of each attribute that makes up the leadership sub-scale and the overall mean difference

Table 12  The actual and ideal percentage agreements, the difference between agreements of each attribute that makes up the education sub-scale and the overall mean difference

Table 13  Number and categories of advantages and disadvantages given for each employment option