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**Nurse Managers' Ethical Conflict with Their  
Health Care Organizations:  
A New Zealand Perspective**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
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in Health Service Management  
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**Linda Maree Chalmers**

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## ABSTRACT

Immersed in a context of constrained health resources, nurse managers are at great risk of the experience and negative consequences of values clashes and ethical conflict, such as burnout and attrition. Replicating a qualitative descriptive study previously conducted in Canada (Gaudine & Beaton, 2002) this research is aimed at increasing knowledge of the experience of nurse managers' ethical conflict with their health care organizations in New Zealand. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from eight nurse managers in New Zealand, which was analyzed using a general inductive approach to qualitative research. The experience of advocating for values that may be shared by both nursing and the health care organization, such as safety, teamwork and quality patient care, were revealed in the conceptual category of *Nursing Management Advocacy*. As with their Canadian study counterparts, *Isolation* was revealed as a key factor that made the experience of ethical conflict worse and involves the social experiences of silencing, employment barriers and invisibility. *Support* describes the factors that mitigated the experience of ethical conflict and involves personal, professional and organizational support, and are likewise similar to the experiences of Canadian nurse managers. The *Bottom Line* describes a focal point of the experience of ethical conflict where the health care organizations predominantly fiscal bottom line was confronted and challenged by nurse managers, and where the nurse manager might reach their own bottom line and choose to leave the organization. *Being and Becoming Nursing Leaders* describes the outcomes of ethical conflict for nurse managers who were not only transformed into nursing leaders, through learning, reflection, and growth but also counted the costs of nursing leadership. This study concludes that supportive colleagues, organizational structures and culture are essential to mitigating the experience of ethical conflict and isolation which nurse managers encounter. The study also concludes that reducing isolation and supporting nurse managers will ensure that nursing values are appropriately represented and articulated in the health care organization's decision making systems and processes.

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