

## Editorial

### **Letter from the Editor:**

#### **Isolation: Real or Perceived?**

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In the mid-nineties, researchers at the University of North Dakota, Rural Health Research Center conducted a large study of job satisfaction and retention of rural nurses. One aspect of that project was to determine the areas of concern related to work for the participants. Isolation from other nurses was a major concern noted by the participants. This isolation was evident in issues such as lack of access to resources that could help the nurses with knowledge relative to nursing care decisions, work-related conflict, and the sharing of what works and what doesn't, including continuing education. There seems to be little evidence that this has changed over time.

However, with the advances in technology that has occurred in the last 10 years, isolation from other nurses is no longer a necessary part of rural nursing. While geography not changed, there are many resources available to rural and remote nurses, primarily through the Internet, but some are available through mail, telephone, and FAX. The key is commitment, commitment by the rural nurse to become involved in professional organizations. Organizations such as the Rural Nurse Organization or the American Nurses Association provide access to many resources.

Professional organizations exist to provide their members with information through newsletters, journals, on-line chat groups, resource directories, interest groups, etc. However, they cannot exist without commitment, financial commitment to join by the members. That commitment must be sustained in order for the organizations to meet the needs of the members.

Additionally, commitment is needed from the members to get involved in the activities of the organization.

Commitment is being informed about new treatments, changes in procedures, etc. that will keep your practice current. This can now be more easily accomplished through continuing education that is on the Internet, provided in most paper copy journals, (e.g. AJN) and through video-tapes. Complete college courses are now readily available to students at a distance.

Commitment also means being part of the solution to problems in the work environment. Using the existing networks, one can find information and suggestions on approaches to challenges, conflicts, and innovations that will help rural nurses provide high quality care. Become committed today.

If you have comments please contact me at [jdunkin@bama.ua.edu](mailto:jdunkin@bama.ua.edu).