

HARTFORD GERONTOLOGICAL NURSING LEADERS: FROM FUNDING INITIATIVE TO NATIONAL ORGANIZATION[☆]



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In 2000, the John A. Hartford Foundation established the Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity Program initiative, acknowledging nursing's key role in the care of the growing population of older adults. This program has supported 249 nurse scientists with pre- and postdoctoral awards. As a result of the program's success, several Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity Program awardees formed an alumni organization to continue to advance the quality care of older adults. This group of Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity Program awardees joined others receiving support from the John A. Hartford Foundation nursing initiatives to grow a formal organization, the Hartford Gerontological Nursing Leaders (HGNL). The purpose of this article is to present the development, accomplishments, and challenges of the HGNL, informing other professional nursing organizations that are experiencing similar accomplishments and challenges. This article also demonstrates the power of a funding initiative to grow an organization dedicated to impact gerontological health and health care through research, practice, education, and policy. (Index words: Academic; Aged; Policy; Education; Practice; Nursing; Geriatrics) *J Prof Nurs* 32:25–31, 2016. © 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

EACH DAY, 10,000 people in the United States celebrate their 65th birthday. By 2030, the number of older adults, 65 years and older, will increase from the current 48 million to 73 million. Further, the age group

85 years and older will be the fastest growing population segment, doubling in number from today's 6 million to 12 million by 2035 (United States Census Bureau, 2012). Nurses are on the forefront of caring for the growing number

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of older adults. Consequently, the need for increasing gerontological nursing capacity grows stronger every day.

Acknowledging the importance of gerontological nursing to the nation's health, in 2000, the John A. Hartford Foundation established the Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity Program. Since 2000, this program has supported 249 nurse scientists with pre- and/or postdoctoral awards. As a result of the program's success, several current and past Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity awardees formed an alumni organization to extend their influence through networking and collaboration in scholarly endeavors. This group of Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity awardees has grown into a formal organization, the Hartford Gerontological Nursing Leaders (HGNL). The HGNL members' accomplishments include conducting research on evidence-based practice initiatives, influencing faculty development, and promoting leadership opportunities. Recognizing that public policy impacts gerontological health care, HGNL members also focus on creating new paths to influence public policy.

The purpose of this article is to present HGNL's development, accomplishments, and challenges, demonstrating the power of a single funded initiative to grow an organization dedicated to impacting gerontological research, practice, education, and policy. By presenting HGNL's experience, this article can inform other professional nursing organizations that may be facing similar growth and challenges.

From Geriatric Nursing Initiative to National Organization

The underpinnings of the HGNL organization began in 2000 when the John A. Hartford Foundation partnered with the American Academy of Nursing to form the Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity initiative. The Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity Program had two goals: (a) to expand the scholarly and leadership base in geriatric nursing and (b) to establish centers of excellence in top-tier schools of nursing to enhance the schools' capacity to grow the next generation of gerontological researchers and leaders (Franklin et al., 2011). The Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity initiative included predoctoral awards (later named the Patricia G. Archbold Predoctoral Scholar Award) and postdoctoral fellowships (later named Claire M. Fagin Fellow Award). As part of the Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity initiative, pre- and postdoctoral awardees partnered with senior interdisciplinary mentors to undertake the critical work of research, leadership, and faculty development to advance gerontological nursing.

In 2009, several past scholars and fellows formed an alumni organization to use their academic and leadership training to further advance gerontological nursing. The Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity Alumni organization has since undergone multiple organizational changes while embracing the national trend toward interprofessional health care. These changes began

when their parent organization, the National Hartford Center of Gerontological Nursing Excellence (NHCGNE), moved from the American Academy of Nursing to become a planned unit of the Gerontological Society of America in July 2012. This move reflected the John A. Hartford Foundation's growing emphasis on interprofessional teams to promote health for older adults. Along with their parent organization, the Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity Alumni also moved from the American Academy of Nursing to the Gerontological Society of America, and commenced organizational development planning under the direction of their parent organization. Between September 2012 and November 2013, the Alumni formally adopted a new name, HGNL. In November 2013, the HGNL ratified new organizational structure, rules, and guidelines to establish a more inclusive and robust organization. These organizational changes included a new mission to deliver quality care to older adults by providing nursing leadership and establishing strategic partnerships across all the gerontological disciplines.

These organizational changes also formally expanded membership from those supported through the John A. Hartford Foundation's Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity Initiative to all who have received support through any of the many John A. Hartford Foundation funding mechanisms, including membership in the NHCGNE. For example, the HGNL's monthly newsletter is sent to 245 individuals, including both the HGNL members and NHCGNE members. In 2015, to sustain HGNL's growth and mission, members voted to merge with their parent organization, National Hartford Center of Gerontological Nursing Excellence, forming a unified voice to influence gerontological health care (see Tables 1 and 2).

Through small and large group activities, in a unified support of the mission, HGNL members have developed strong collaborative relationships resulting in publications, presentations, peer mentoring, and widespread networking. The group uses a variety of communication approaches including social media, newsletters, and email blasts. They are focused, strategically working together to impact the future of gerontological health and health care through engagement in research, practice, faculty and leadership development, and public policy.

Influencing Evidence-Based Practices

HGNL members have generated important research that impacts gerontological evidence-based practice. As a framework for clinical practice, evidence-based practice integrates the best available scientific evidence with the expertise of the clinician and with the patients' preferences and values to make decisions about health care (Levin & Feldman, 2006; Straus, Richardson, Glasziou, & Haynes, 2005). The four components of evidence-based practice are evidence synthesis, translation, integration, and improvement science (Academic Center for Evidence-Based Practice (ACE), 2012). HGNL members have conducted research addressing all four components.

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