Advancing the Study of the Theory of Technological Competency as Caring in Nursing

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Dean Anne Boykin, Ms. Christine E. Lynn, Mrs. Barbara Wymer, Distinguished Guests, beloved faculty of the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing, students, friends and colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

I am deeply honored to be the first recipient of the John F. Wymer, Jr. Distinguished Professorship in Nursing. This distinction brings with it, great responsibilities and myriad expectations for further contributions to Nursing, in continuing the design, development, and appreciation of a research agenda focused on advancing a theory that is especially meaningful in this technology-driven world - the theory of technological competency as caring in nursing.

In the letter announcing my selection as the first recipient of the professorship, Dr. Boykin wrote this description of John F. Wymer, Jr.
“He served as Chief Executive Officer at Good Samaritan Hospital for thirty-four years. He loved nurses and long recognized the value of nursing to the healing of patients. John was a Life Fellow of the American College of Health Care Executives; President of the Florida Hospital Association; a member of the State’s Advisory Health Council; and a member of numerous boards in our community. John was a bright, kind and gentle person with a great sense of humor.”

I did not have an opportunity to meet John Wymer, but what I know of him as a music lover, person of integrity, and an ambassador of good will - the man who moved Good Samaritan Hospital from its humble beginnings to the beacon of hope that it is today, I know through his wife, Mrs. Barbara Wymer. Thank you very much for sharing your husband Mrs. Wymer, and for being here today to grace this auspicious occasion.

This is an opportune time for Nursing and a gratifying time for me. Being a recipient of the John F. Wymer, Jr. Distinguished Professorship in Nursing is a recognition of a life-long passion and exceptional achievements, and allows me to further a love affair with research that begun some 25 years ago. Like John F. Wymer, Jr, music has fashioned an on-going affair in my knowing of nursing. My interest in nursing research as instrumental to the development of knowledge in Nursing allowed me to reconcile my love for music with my passion for nursing. Initially, music as an intervention for postoperative pain intrigued me. But, as my appreciation for nursing grew – nurtured
by an environment of scholarship at FAU’s Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing, my appreciation of the arts and aesthetics in nursing provided the ultimate avenue to communicate the nursing that transpires between the nurse and nursed, languaging nursing situations through music, poetry, sculpture, dance, painting, and other artful expressions.

My commitment to knowing life transitions in health and illness fostered my inquisitive knowing, creating the impetus to discover the relationship among technology, caring, and nursing. In my theory of *Technological Competency as Caring in Nursing*, (Locsin, 2005) the practice of nursing is knowing persons. Within this practice is technological knowing, the use of technologies of nursing and health for the purpose of appreciating persons as whole and complete in the moment.

This mid-range theory positions ‘knowing- persons’ as a process of nursing within a formalized concept of nursing. In this theory, two distinctive nursing phenomena, those of ‘caring for’ and ‘being cared for’ dominate the foci of research. Through the generous funding provisions of the John F. Wymer professorship, testing propositions within these phenomena can transpire, for example, describing the lived experience of *being cared for* among persons who are dependent upon technologies for care. Currently, data are being generated from nurses who have experienced *caring for* persons dependent on technologies in intensive care – high tech environments in Thailand.
Determinants for utilizing the theory include advances in technology that are focused on three dimensions: technology as completing human beings to re-form the ideal ‘picture’ of a human being as person such as with cyborgs or cybernetic organisms; technology as machine technologies, e.g. computers and gadgetries that enhance nursing activities to provide quality patient care as in Penelope or Da Vinci in the Operating Theatres; and technologies that mimic human beings and human activities to meet the demands of nursing care practices, e.g. anthropomorphic machines and robots such as ‘nursebots’ (Locsin & Barnard, 2007). These technologies provide opportunities for nurses to excel in contemporary and futuristic nursing care.

Complex high-tech technologies such as those used in warfare, for example the sophisticated killing machines in use in Afghanistan and Iraq; and technologies of transportation driven by an insatiable demand for speed, create increasing chances of persons losing composite parts such as limbs and organs, creating conditions and situations demanding health care practices that are distinct, appropriate and timely.

Theory-based nursing practice grounded in technological competency as caring in nursing can therefore be seen as essential in both ordinary and extraordinary times. From this theoretical view, the focus on knowing persons as whole and complete in the moment and the practice of technological knowing (Locsin, 2009) altogether provide the best possible nursing practice that can be offered in contemporary times and in the future. Opportunities such as these are critical to the continuing value and survival of nursing as integral to human health and healing.
The theory of technological competency as caring in nursing has been recognized internationally. A Japanese translation of the book was released in May 2009. Dr. Tetsuya Tanioka – who led the translation team, has invited me to present the theory in various schools and hospitals in Japan through the auspices of the University of Tokushima. At the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, I am invited to conduct lectures and seminars/workshops on the theory to various educational and health care institutions as well, while negotiations are in progress for continuing visiting professorships in Thailand and in the Philippines. Furthermore, because of my nursing research interest in human-humanoid interaction, I have been invited to write a co-authored chapter on this topic by Alice Davidson and Marilyn Ray. Publication is expected in 2010.

With the support provided by the Distinguished Professorship, nursing research can be conducted to establish evidence that provides rigor to the propositions of theory-based practice. It is my hope that these investigations will increase the theory’s notoriety as a rigorous guide for practice, and its popularity as a responsive theoretical perspective that many professional nurses will affirm as essential in their practice, especially in high-tech and demanding settings.

In conclusion, I believe that in concert with the goals and expectations of the John F. Wymer, Jr. Distinguished Professorship in Nursing, I can provide a clearer understanding of the valuing of technological knowing that is influential to the practice of contemporary
nursing. I am extremely grateful to Mr. and Mrs. John Wymer for recognizing and supporting the view of nursing as a discipline of knowledge and a practice profession. I hope to live up to John’s vision of care by advancing the knowledge of nursing within the view of technological competency as caring in nursing. It is my hope that with further knowing, nursing practice shall focus on knowing persons – as participants in their care, rather than as objects of our care.

To paraphrase Sr. Simone Roach (1987) - competence without compassion can be brutal, and compassion without competence is irresponsible.

Thank you.
References


