

International Corner

Highlights from the 10th WFNN Quadrennial Congress in Toronto

Representatives from 20 countries gathered for the 10th Quadrennial Congress of the World Federation of Neuroscience Nursing (WFNN) in Toronto, Canada, May 23–27, 2009. The theme of this year's Congress, "Founded on Tradition, Focused on Tomorrow," celebrated the progress and many achievements of the WFNN over 4 decades. The meeting also renewed international relationships critical to the development of professional neuroscience nursing around the world.

Featured speakers during the Congress included Christine Eberhardie, MSc RGN RNT ILTM MHSM, Agnes M. Walker, and Roberta Bondar, OC OOnt MD PhD FRCP® FRSC. Eberhardie, of the University of London Hospital, United Kingdom, provided an illustrated historical overview of nursing practice and its evolution over half a century. She is currently a member of the editorial board of the *British Journal of Neuroscience Nursing* and volunteers as an oral historian for the Nurses Voices Project in Great Britain. Our own history as nurses and the role that we have played in the advancement of care is a topic often overlooked. Eberhardie's creative presentation linking key historical events to nursing practice progress illustrated the central role that nurses have in patient care.

Walker, cofounder of AANN and founder of the WFNN, delivered an insightful address detailing the struggles and triumphs of the creation of the WFNN. *Neuroscience*, a term commonly used today, was coined by Walker and placed in the dictionary by her husband, a neurosurgeon who worked as the dictionary's medical consultant. Walker and her colleagues focused their efforts to promote an international network of nurses who specialized in the care of neuroscience patients with nearly no funding, no pre-existing organization to model from, and vast obstacles to success including language barriers, diversity in regional practice patterns, and immense geographic distance. Despite adversity, Walker persevered, establishing both the WFNN and AANN, and was instrumental in the creation of specialty certification. She remains an inspiration to both international and U.S.-based neuroscience nurses.

Keynote speaker Roberta Bondar, the world's first neurologist in space, provided a moving account of life in space and her role in neurologic research. Bondar, named by *Time* magazine as one of North America's best explorers, is a true renaissance woman, training in zoology, experimental pathology, neurobiology, and professional nature photography. Her renowned research revealed how the neurological system responds to zero-gravity exposure and inspired further investigation into repair mechanisms and the treatment of stroke and Parkinson's disease. Bondar is globally recognized for her pioneering leadership in space medicine research and now serves as chancellor at Trent University in Canada.

Additional learning opportunities included lunchtime table talks featuring a different topic at each table with informal moderating by a nurse expert. These roundtable discussions offered the opportunity for nurses from many countries to compare and contrast care of a single patient population based on local practice patterns, presence or absence of nationalized health care, resource availability, and access to care. The Mentor Program linked expert nurses with mentees to foster professional growth in a wide range of areas including clinical practice skills, nursing research, assistance with publishing, and more.

Japan to Host 2013 WFNN Congress

For many, the closing ceremony concluded a life-changing conference that allowed each nurse to see neuroscience nursing outside the confines of their hospital and their own city or country. The flags representing each country were solemnly put away for another 4 years and the WFNN flag was passed to Japan as host of the 2013 Congress. The Japanese delegates reveled in the honor of hosting the next WFNN Congress and proudly graced the audience with a choreographed Japanese dance and a presentation of the planned Congress site—Nagoya, Japan.

If you missed the recent WFNN Congress but remain interested in learning more about international nursing practice, please take the time to contact the WFNN.

Upcoming International Conference—Save the Date!

North Sea Congress—The 9th Quadrennial Congress of the European Association of Neuroscience Nurses

May 4–7, 2011

Floreal Congress Center

Blankenberge, Belgium

I will look forward to seeing you all in Japan!

Christi DeLemos, MS ACNP-c