

The
World of Nursing
in the

Land of Smiles

Adorned in traditional Thai garb, the intricate movements of her body perfectly in tune with the background sounds of Thai xylophone, bamboo organ, saw fiddle and klui flute, Maneemon Phrommai and her colleagues could have easily passed for a professional dance troupe performing on stage before a royal Thai audience. Yet none of the dancers on the evening of January 25, 2006 were professional performers. They were, instead, health care professionals chosen from among the faculty and staff of Ramathibodi Hospital and Mahidol University in Bangkok.



Mrs. Mancemon Phrommai from the Faculty of Medicine at Ramathibodi Hospital, Mahidol University, was one of several Ramathibodi Hospital employees, faculty and students who performed a traditional Thai dance to welcome the international delegation to Bangkok.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICK ALLEN

Mahidol University's mission can be concisely summarized by His Royal Highness Prince Mahidol of Songkla's statement: True success is not in learning but in its application for the benefit of mankind.



YSN's Patricia Jackson Allen with conference colleague from Aomori, Japan



Deans Kobkul, Grey and Cronenwett with Professor Supanee Senadisai



Apinya Siripitayakunkit and Somsiri Athaseri who spent the 2004-05 academic year at YSN

During the evening ceremony on January 25, the Mahidol dance troupe entertained hundreds of nursing scholars from sixteen countries who had traveled to Bangkok, Thailand to participate in a conference titled, "Prevention and Management of Chronic Conditions: International Perspectives." It was the first conference of its kind to bring together top scholars from throughout Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North America to discuss the role of nursing research and practice in helping communities around the world manage chronic conditions. YSN, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Nursing (UNC) and faculties of nursing at Ramathibodi Hospital and Mahidol University co-sponsored the conference.

Performing to an enthralled audience, the dancers stretched to the rhythm of the melody, holding their bodies upright from the neck to the hips, moving up and down using only their knees, their arms and hands held in curves at various levels, executing the 108 intricate poses that make up the traditional Thai dance. Although they

moved in unison, each dancer was still able to explore her individual talents as a creative artist. "Indeed, the beauty of the Thai dance depends on the ability of each individual to make a unique contribution to the performance," explains Dr. Somchit Hanucharurnkul, Chairperson of the Scientific Program at Mahidol University and Chair of the Conference Organizing Committee. "In this respect, Thai dance is not unlike nursing, the mastery of which also requires teamwork and individuality, and combines artistry, creativity and technical expertise. Together these elements help nurses better understand and improve the human condition."

Improving the human condition through nursing research and practice was very much on the minds of conference participants who gathered in Bangkok. "Chronic illnesses have replaced acute illnesses as major public health risks around the world," explains YSN Dean Margaret Grey. According to World Health Organization statistics from 2002, chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer today

represent nearly 60 percent of global deaths and almost one-third of global disease. This rapid increase presents a wide array of new and significant challenges to national health care systems and to international health organizations who are trying to curb the spread of chronic diseases, especially among underserved populations.

The three day conference focused on the prevention and management of chronic illness, decreasing family caregiving burdens, the impact of chronic illnesses on health care systems and establishing an international network of nurse researchers and clinicians in this area of care. The idea for the conference began several years ago, when Mahidol University School of Nursing approached YSN and UNC about developing an international faculty and student exchange program to help them build their nursing research capabilities. Then in 2002, after having successfully started that program, Mahidol University invited Yale and UNC to co-host an international nursing conference to focus on chronic conditions worldwide.

Eight YSN faculty and staff members presented on a variety of topics (listed on opposite page). “Our faculty have been committed to research and practice to improve life for the chronically ill for many years,” says Dean Grey. “The great majority of our work focuses in this area. Thus, this conference provided an opportunity for us to not only share our work but to learn from our colleagues all over the world.”

There is a saying in Thailand, “Knowledge gives rise to friendship.” YSN’s friendship with Mahidol University dates back to the 1970’s, when Poolsook Sriyaporn ’73, enrolled in the Pediatric Nursing program at YSN. After completing her degree and returning to Thailand, Poolsook joined the faculty of Ramathibodi Department of Nursing, but never lost contact with her colleagues at Yale. Her experience at YSN created the foundation for a fruitful partnership between Yale and Mahidol universities that continues to support the scholarship of nursing students and faculty in both countries. According to Dr. Somchit, it is not surprising that the two universi-

ties have maintained close ties. “Mahidol University’s mission can be concisely summarized by His Royal Highness Prince Mahidol of Songkla’s statement: “True success is not in learning but in its application for the benefit of mankind,” she said. “In this, our ultimate goal is like that of the Yale School of Nursing, whose mission is to improve the health of all people. Both institutions have benefited greatly from working together to accomplish this shared goal.”

Indeed, the Bangkok conference had numerous positive outcomes. “We feel the conference has been a great success in enabling us to engage our colleagues from all over the world who shared what they were doing to improve the health and quality of life for those living with chronic conditions in their countries,” says Dr. Somchit.

The conference also provided an opportunity for practicing nurses who had never before taken part in an international nursing forum to participate in the discussions. Among them was a five member delegation from the Sihanouk Hospital Center of HOPE in Phnom

Penh, Cambodia. Managed and staffed by HOPE Worldwide, Sihanouk is a charity hospital serving the poor of Cambodia while training national health care professionals. Sihanouk Hospital’s staff first learned of the Bangkok conference from Terri Clark ’79, PhD, RN, CNM. Dr. Clark had traveled to Cambodia in March-April 2005 as a volunteer peer nurse educator-mentor for the International Center for Equal Healthcare Access (ICEHA). There she met with the Center of HOPE staff and was so impressed by their work in caring for patients with HIV/AIDS in Phnom Penh and their efforts to document their outcomes that she encouraged them to submit a poster describing their work to the Bangkok Conference. Their poster was accepted, but Sihanouk Hospital lacked adequate funds to send a delegation to Bangkok. Having learned of this, the conference planning committee, which included representatives from YSN, UNC and Mahidol University, made a decision to subsidize the delegation’s conference-related expenses.

“It is a great honor to have been



Drs. Wantana, Somchit and Williams with Professor Supanee Senadisai



Delegation from the Sihanouk Hospital of HOPE, Phnom Penh, Cambodia



Buddhist monks waiting for a river boat in Bangkok, Thailand

included in this important conference,” says Mr. Hong Song, a member of the Cambodian delegation. “We are extremely grateful to Yale, UNC and Mahidol University for giving us the opportunity to interact with and to learn from our international colleagues.”

For Mahidol University students who had spent time at YSN as part of their doctoral studies, the conference provided an opportunity to reunite with their YSN mentors. “It was wonderful to be able to welcome our mentors from Yale to Thailand and to join them in discussions that addressed some of the most important health care issues facing our country and the rest of the world,” says Apinya Siripitayakunkit, who, along with Malatee Rungruangsiripan and Somsiri Athaseri spent the 2004–05 academic year at YSN. All three students plan to defend their doctoral dissertations in 2007. Their YSN and Mahidol University mentors are expected to be in attendance at those events.

“In addition to the opportunity to share our work with our colleagues, this conference also provided a chance for us to see how our former students have matured into nursing scholars with solid career plans and unique research interests,” says Dr. Deborah Chyun '82, who supported Kusuma Khuwatsamrit's doctoral research on self management interventions for Thai patients with coronary disease while Kusuma studied at Yale during the 2003–04 academic year. Kusuma successfully defended her doctoral dissertation on January 27, the final day of the conference.

“YSN has led many of our colleagues in helping to deal with the issues of chronic illness in developed and developing countries,” says Dean Grey. “We also provide extensive training to our doctoral students to help them lead the next generation of health care professionals in addressing these issues. This work is incredibly important to our mission and to the health of people around the world.”

YSN PRESENTERS AT THE **Chronic Illness Conference**



Patricia Jackson-Allen Concurrent Sessions: (1) Chronic Care by FNP's: Findings from the 2005 Graduate Survey; (2) “If Mama Ain't Happy, Ain't Nobody Happy” Maternal Depression: Implications for Pediatric Care; and (3) National Survey Findings on Children with Special Health Care Needs in the United States



Margaret Grey Conference Welcome Address and Plenary Session: Role of the Advanced Practice Nurse in the Care of People with Chronic Conditions



Deborah Chyun Plenary Session: Chronic Illness in the Elderly—The Failure of Prevention Across the Lifespan Concurrent Session: Issues in Chronic Illness Across Lifespan—Risk Factors for Declining Quality of Life in Older Adults with Type 2 Diabetes



Katherine Jones Plenary Session: Dissemination and Utilization of Research Findings to Management of Chronic Illness



Lawrence Scahill Concurrent Sessions: (1) Teaching Social Skills to Children with Autism: A Model Curriculum; (2) Recent Advances in Assessment and Pharmacotherapy of Autism (presented by M. Pachler); and (3) Risperidone in Short- and Long-Term Treatment of Children with Autism.



Ann Williams Concurrent Session: Home Visit Intervention to Improve Adherence to HAART: A Random Controlled Trial



Tony Ma Concurrent Session: Application of Database in Chronic Disease Management—A Case Study



Elaine Gustafson Concurrent Session: A School-Based Intervention for the Prevention of Type 2 Diabetes in High Risk Youth