



Jim Leitner and his wife, Sandra

**“Nurses play a vital role in our world. Nurses make a concrete and tangible impact on the lives of the people whom they serve. Everywhere there is a desperate need for their services.”**

**Jim Leitner** is a member of the Yale College Class of 1975. He is Founder and President of Falcon Management Corporation and serves on the Yale University President’s Council on International Activities as well as the Yale University Investment Committee. He and his wife, Sandra, are committed to investing in the future of nursing.

**Nurses** are key players in the trends toward globalization in health care. Our world is rapidly becoming more interdependent. Technological innovation, free trade, the rule of law, and democratization are driving this interconnectedness. The mobility of labor forces across borders is unprecedented. Doctors Without Borders has become a potent international phenomenon. The need for skilled, educated nursing leaders and nurse clinicians is less widely known but perhaps more urgently felt, from U.S. communities and throughout the world.

Nurses are emigrating in record numbers from the developing world to Western countries to satisfy the dire need for skilled practitioners and to further their own professional goals. These nurses gain skills, knowledge, and valuable experience. Down the road, many of them return to their countries of origin and will be equipped to add significant value by leveraging these resources. Expatriate nurses also send money back home. These remittances serve as a lifeline for families and communities as well as a catalyst for investment and growth as they filter through the economic system.

However, globalization is a two-way street. Immigration also has adverse outcomes for developing countries. “Brain drain” is a serious drag on productive capacity in the third world. Immigration of nurses—even temporarily—is depleting the health care capacity of developing countries, leaving ever-scarcer numbers of skilled medical practitioners to care for fast-growing populations confronting grave health conditions.

Sponsoring Yale nursing students to spend time in developing countries has a double positive impact. It helps compensate for the erosion of health care systems in the third world. Nursing students are equipped to provide critical services to those most in need. They share their skills with local counterparts and the communities in which they work. This transfer of skills can provide a sustainable, structural improvement in health care quality and human resource capacity.

In addition to the clear benefits to local communities, perhaps the most significant boon is to the students themselves. Students who go abroad inevitably return home having gained at least as much as they’ve given. A stint in the developing world broadens their

horizons and perspectives, accelerating personal and professional growth. Nursing students have the opportunity to gain exposure to new areas of medicine and to confront novel public health challenges. Severe skills shortages and dire circumstances may enable them to assume leadership roles and grapple with the level of responsibility that comes with working in these settings under the tutelage of faculty and seasoned local nursing professionals.

The synergy for students and communities is striking. YSN has long believed in the benefits that accrue to all parties when its students participate in international clinical rotations. The programs in Esteli, Nicaragua, Palmerston, New Zealand and Tugela Ferry, South Africa, in particular, have history and depth and offer rich learning experiences.

In Tugela Ferry, South Africa, YSN had a midwifery clinical rotation for the past five years that brought together students committed to working in the global health arena and a staff of seasoned traditional midwives, a winning combination that led to the strengthening of skills and knowledge on both sides. There are now new relationships between YSN and nursing administration at Church of Scotland Hospital that have the potential to grow into a wide range of clinical opportunities for our students and the South African nurses.

The South African site is just one example of how nursing students from Yale make a meaningful impact on underserved communities while simultaneously adding a challenging and unique set of clinical experiences to their resumes.

Sending nursing students abroad is a win-win situation. Both the students and the local communities who receive them realize tangible, long-term benefits from the exchange. Nurses provide an under-recognized, underappreciated service that is critically important for the development of every society. I firmly believe that high-level, macro approaches to promoting development must be coupled with grassroots, bottom-up, direct-service efforts. A fundamental human right to health can only be as effective as the human capital and physical infrastructure available on the ground to implement it. Nursing students are the prospective stewards of our health and well-being. What better investment could we make in our future?