

25 Years Young: The Nurses Health Study

Kathleen E. Jones, RN

When her grandchildren were young, Jane Kasefang Carlton, RN, began participating in a study that she thought would be "beneficial to all people," and might improve the lives of her grandchildren. What she didn't know then was the tremendous impact the study would have on the health of women or that the study would continue until her grandchildren were graduated from college and beyond. She didn't know she would be filling out questionnaires and submitting blood, urine, and even toenail clippings to be studied. She is still participating in that study today.

Since 1976, the Nurses Health Study (NHS) has become one of the largest prospective investigations into the risk factors of major chronic diseases for women. Frank Speizer, MD, established the study, with the initial goal of studying the potential long-term effects of using oral contraceptives. Married RNs between the ages of 30 and 55 in 1976 were enrolled in the study. The investigators believed that because of their nursing education they would be able to respond accurately to technically worded questions. Eleven states were selected: California, Connecticut, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas.

The NHS initially sent surveys to 170,000 nurses; approximately 122,000 responded and were enrolled in the

survey. The study has continued to yield an amazing 90% response rate over the past 25 years.

Fran Grodstein, PhD, assistant professor of medicine, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard University, one of the core investigators of the NHS, says the participating nurses deserve the credit for the high response rate. That high rate still continues today, despite the increasing age of the participants.

What You Can Learn from a Toenail

The study includes exogenous hormones from oral contraceptives use to postmenopause use. Grodstein says the study has identified risk factors of, and benefits to, these hormones. According to Grodstein, the studies have indicated that low doses of estrogen protect against heart disease, but they are associated with increased risk of stroke. Another conclusion drawn from the NHS is that in prevention of a second heart attack, estrogen has a negative effect in the short term, but appears to provide some protection over the long term.

The questionnaires also collect information about diet factors. Those processing the study data have concluded that high folate levels are associated with a decreased risk of breast cancer, but that drinking one to two alcoholic beverages per day may increase that risk. The dietary study was also instrumental in determining that eating whole grains helps to protect against heart disease.

Although collecting toenail clippings sounds a little strange, Grodstein says they are used to detect trace minerals, such as selenium. From the studies, it appears selenium may

Quality Healthcare
isn't our only specialty.

We also specialize in
compassion.

Northside's Women's Services is ranked first in the nation in the number of babies delivered and provides complete care for mother and baby. Officially opening its doors in 1999, Northside's state-of-the-art Women's Center is considered a benchmark by hospitals across the nation and routinely conducts site visits for representatives from other hospitals that want to develop similar centers. The Women's Center at Northside Hospital is a hallmark of our service and is home to board-certified OB/GYNs, Neonatologists, Perinatologists, Nurse Midwives and more. The Women's Center is an excellent place for energetic staff to build rewarding careers. One of the first facilities of its kind, The Center has received both local and national media attention for its unique service and design features. Our Women's Center includes the following departments and services. Available opportunities may vary.

THE CENTER FOR PERINATAL MEDICINE - Level II and III ultrasound, maternal-fetal medicine specialists

LABOR AND DELIVERY - LDRs, obstetrical urgent care, c-section suites and OBRR, critical care obstetrics

HIGH RISK PERINATAL - specialty unit for high risk pregnancy care, including preterm labor and multiple gestations

FAMILY-CENTERED CARE UNITS - newborn admission team, mother-baby nursing, lactation consultation, 24 hours a day, 7 days per week

SPECIAL CARE NURSERIES - Level III, developmental care, state-of-the-art technology, bedside information systems

BREAST CARE CENTER - breast imaging specialist, mammography, stereotactic and surgical biopsy, outpatient breast surgery

A WOMAN'S PLACE - specialty boutique for healthcare products and consultation



WOMENFIRST - childbirth education, midlife seminars, health risk appraisals

GYNECOLOGY - specialty unit exclusively for gynecology patients

Northside Hospital is a 444-bed, not-for-profit community hospital that serves over 300,000 patients annually and has one of the region's largest medical work forces for a non-system community hospital. We offer competitive salaries and benefits, relocation assistance, flexible staffing with a variety of shifts, internships, tuition reimbursement, on-site childcare and continuing education opportunities.

Interested applicants, please send resume via fax to: (404) 851-6569. E-mail: employment@northside.com. Mail to: Northside Hospital, Human Resources, 1100 Johnson Ferry Road NE, Building One, Suite 130, Atlanta, GA 30342. Toll free phone: 1-866-591-1167. Equal Opportunity Employer.



NORTHSIDE HOSPITAL

www.northside.com

also decrease the risk of breast cancer. The toenail clippings are also being used now in a study to detect secondhand smoke and the disease-causing effects in nonsmokers.

Study Sequels

Nurses Health Study II was established in 1989 by Walter Willett, MD, and colleagues with funding from the National Institutes of Health. The study was established to continue the missions of studying oral contraceptives, but it also included the diet and lifestyle factors that became a part of the first study as it matured. Case control studies suggested that the younger women (ages 25 to 42 in 1989) who began using oral contraceptives during adolescence might be at risk for substantial increases in breast cancer rates.

Fourteen states, California, Connecticut, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas, were included in NHS II. While surveys were mailed to 517,000 people, only about 124,000 responded. A total of 116,686 remained in NHS II after exclusions for incomplete forms and women who did not meet study criteria. The respondent rate for NHS II continues to be at 90%.

Quality-of-life issues are being addressed in both studies at the request of some of the nurses who participated in the early studies. As a part of the second study, infertility issues are also being addressed. DNA samples will be used for other studies, and the participants may be asked to submit an oral swab, which will provide the needed information.

Questionnaires are mailed out every other year to participants of both studies. NHS is mailed out in even years, with

the last survey sent out in 2000. NHS II questionnaires were mailed out this year.

An offshoot of NHS II is the Growing Up Today Study (GUTS), which revolves around the health issues of children, and involves children of NHS study participants. GUTS is addressing the images children have of their bodies and the increase in childhood obesity. Because of the rapid changes that occur in youth, these questionnaires are sent out yearly.

Due to the willingness of participants, almost 20,000 phone interviews were recently completed with nurses who are older than 70. The study focuses on the maintenance of memory in healthy women, making this the largest memory study ever done. The next phase will be a repeat of the phone calls with a similar interview so the researchers can follow whether the memories have changed over time.

When Kasefang Carlton began her participation, she didn't know the study would affect not only her grandchildren, but also the health of all women. "The idea seemed like the right thing to do, and I felt that once I started it, I should see it through," she says.

The continued participation of Carlton and the other nurses who have remained involved in the study demonstrate the compassion and concern for others that is a building block in the foundation of the spirit that is nursing.

Kathleen E. Jones, RN, Westerville, OH, has 20 years of nursing experience in med/surg, oncology, pediatrics, and in an outpatient setting. She is currently working on a collection of stories about the many memorable patients for whom she has cared.

2001 CONTINUING EDUCATION SEMINARS

INTRAVENOUS VENIPUNCTURE CERTIFICATION — REGISTER EARLY! (LIMITED TO 70 PARTICIPANTS)

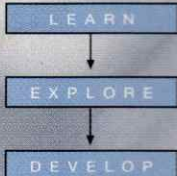
By Susan Masoorli, RN (Voted Nurse Educator for the Year 2000 by the Pennsylvania State Nurses Association.)
(Cospponsored with Perivascular Nurse Consultants, Inc.)*

This program provides the participant with a basic but comprehensive knowledge to properly insert a peripheral IV catheter. The participant will receive in-depth venipuncture theory with multiple opportunities for hands on participation to enhance the learning process. Intravenous Nurse Society 2000 Standards of Practice and Federal Needle Stick Legislation will be incorporated into this program. This certificate is nationally recognized.

CAREER ALTERNATIVES FOR NURSES

By Donna Cardillo, RN, BS

Position yourself for success with the most up-to-date and comprehensive seminar of its type. More than 60 career options available to nurses including parish nursing, forensic nursing, medical-legal consulting, fitness industry, pharmaceutical industry, occupational health, research nursing, and much more.



Intravenous Venipuncture Certification October 18, 2001

10.0 Contact Hours • Registration Fee: \$160
8:00 AM - 5:30 PM
Crowne Plaza Atlanta Powers Ferry
6345 Powers Ferry Rd. NW, Atlanta, GA
(770) 955-1700

Career Alternatives for Nurses October 26, 2001

7.3 Contact Hours • Registration Fee: \$120
8:30 AM - 4:00 PM
Crowne Plaza Atlanta Powers Ferry
6345 Powers Ferry Rd. NW, Atlanta, GA
(770) 955-1700

For more information on seminars, including seminar agendas, go to www.nursingspectrum.com

Nursing Spectrum Division of Continuing Education is accredited as a provider of continuing education through the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation (ANCC), State of Florida Board of Nursing (provider no. FBN 2904), California Board of Registered Nursing (provider no. CEP 13213), and American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN, provider no. 0009259).

*Seminars cosponsored by Perivascular Nurse Consultants, Inc., are approved by the Pennsylvania Nurses Association, an accredited approver and provider of nursing continuing education by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC).



PREREGISTRATION REQUIRED

Send registration and payment (check or money order), non-refundable seven days prior to the event, payable to: Nursing Spectrum, PO Box 33130, Newark, NJ 07188-0130.

For directions, course agendas, group discounts, or questions, please call (800) 866-0919 or e-mail us at: ce@nursingspectrum.com

Please fill in dates and locations next to desired programs:

Date	Location	
_____	_____	Intravenous Venipuncture Certification
_____	_____	Career Alternatives for Nurses

Name _____

Address _____

City/St/ZIP _____

Phone _____

Home E-mail _____

TOTAL PAYMENT ENCLOSED \$ _____

Method of Payment

Check or Money Order (payable to Nursing Spectrum)

Please charge my MASTERCARD VISA AMEX

Card #: _____

Exp. Date: _____

Signature: _____

If you are providing your credit card number for payment, you may fax this form to (800) 285-8880. 10% discount for 5 or more attending the same seminar. Written confirmation not routinely provided.