

COLLABORATION IN ACTION: 2020 AND THE YEAR OF COVID-19

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This edition of *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics, Health & Wellbeing*, 5 focuses on collaboration within healthcare environments and amongst healthcare professionals, organisations, communities, populations and clients. The development of the Journal is a collaboration across the College of Health and draws on the experiences of other disciplines nationally and internationally. You will see collaboration and interprofessional research papers from a wide range of health professionals from third-year undergraduate nursing and occupational therapy students to registered non-health and health professionals from across the health spectrum including nursing, occupational therapy and medicine.

The whole Journal is a good example of how 'many hands make light work'. The initial intention of this Journal was brought together to exemplify the theme of collaboration in support of a recent international conference entitled "Navigating the future of nursing together through education and practice". This event focussed on themes relating to Practice, Purpose, People and Place which is particularly apt in the year of 2020 and COVID-19. The effect of lockdowns locally, nationally and internationally has shown collaboration in the health environment at its very best in working with patients/clients and their whānau. This has also been a year to showcase how health professions and communities in all fields of practice have worked collaboratively as well as inter-professionally in supporting each other during what has been a very stressful and emotive time. While 2020 has also been the year of the International Nurse and Midwife and this celebration has been particularly poignant as a demonstration of how well we all work and interact together collectively across our professional groups and communities.

Worldwide, there is a recognition that interprofessional learning and collaboration in the healthcare environment results in better care and outcomes for patients and clients. Collaborative practice, for example, has been shown to improve health outcomes for people with chronic conditions including non-communicable diseases such as chronic heart and respiratory conditions.

There are many ways of understanding the concept of collaboration and artist Hannah Joynt gives an interpretation in her work presented on the cover of this Journal. "Swan boats" are used as a symbol that speaks to the absurdity of maintaining all the small ordinary things (like swan boats) while living through the time of COVID-19, which is represented by the exquisitely realised natural detail of the pond in a wilderness. The success of the small collaborations that the papers in this Journal represent have all come through the time of COVID-19, this most difficult year, when types of collaboration happened both because of and despite all that has happened. Putting together a Journal in this time reflects achievement in the face of significant difficulties, and in that way, it is a 'small ordinary thing', an absurdity like the swan boat, floating against a wondrous and incongruous background of global connectedness created through the medium of a virus.

Within this edition of *Scope*, connections that have been formed across countries are demonstrated with the opening paper written by Professor Kathie Lassiter who reflects on her academic career and the collaborations she has made throughout her journey both formally and informally. Some of the collaboration from across the globe including the United Kingdom demonstrates how we can work collaboratively in achieving outcomes for differing communities. Technology and time zones are critical elements of collaboration that have become even more obvious during this year of COVID-19.

One of the key themes that we can see through all these papers is how collaboration brings about more engagement in the issues that people are working on. In a Journal arising from an educational institution, it is unsurprising that papers from undergraduate students demonstrate compassionate collaborations between staff and students. Educators use the opportunity of publication as a way of opening doors for students and helping them to get to another level. The undergraduate students have chosen to publish articles that have been written as part of their academic journey within their chosen field of nursing or occupational therapy. These papers demonstrate their passion for areas of interest and fields of health and show how collaboration and interprofessional relationships help to improve health outcomes for a variety of patients and clients. Notably, the student reflections on bicultural health practices are a key expression of what collaboration increasingly means in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Unsurprisingly in a Journal arising within an academic institution, studies also represent the ongoing collaboration between education and the community. The best education occurs when students can do work-based learning in the community. These collaborative relationships are often underpinned by long term connections built between educators and the community, where the value of student projects is acknowledged over many years. Several papers reflect community-based research, demonstrating a mature approach to community collaboration on the part of third-year students.

Other papers reflect the research and reflections arising from the postgraduate student body. The work of doctoral students is usually embedded in the workplace, which means that their research methods and topics had to rapidly change to reflect the COVID-19 related shifts in practice. Several of the papers are the result of critical and creative pivots, which demonstrate how such transitions in thinking can become core to the process of doctoral research.

The collaborations are also between disciplines and some papers reflect creative collaborations between health and non-healthcare disciplines. These include, for example, collaborations between product design and health professionals including occupational therapists and optometrists in an innovative project involving vision screening and schools. There is also an article about how health can be understood in the workplace, from the perspective of veterinary clinics.

The response to COVID-19 in Aotearoa/New Zealand was all about working together as a team. The response worked because there was a fundamental trust that underpinned the community response. Trust is the fundamental value that strengthens effective collaboration. It is demonstrated in every paper in this Journal at multiple levels and through these many articulations, we begin to see how collaborations supported by trust create a climate for new ideas to arise. It reminds us of the African proverb where speed might be equated to going alone, but the real distance is going to be achieved by working together: "If you want to go far go together, if you want to go fast – go alone" ¹.

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¹ <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/50754369-the-power-of-professional-closeness>