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**Title:** The importance of advancing international family nursing practice across the lifespan

It is well documented in nursing literature that partnering with families is vitally important for patients across the lifespan (Jerofke-Owen et al., 2022; Jerofke et al., 2024; Pentland et al., 2016). Vulnerable populations including children, the elderly, and/or people experiencing neurodiversity, mental health illness or critical care rely heavily on their family to protect and advocate for their best interests (Foster et al., 2016; Tu & Liao, 2021). Nurses have a critical role to play in fostering a family centered, strength-based approach to enhance autonomy, empowerment, self-efficacy, hope and positive health outcomes for people and their families (Foster & Blamires, 2023; Gottlieb, 2014; Smith & Ford, 2008). In addition, a strength-based family nursing approach empowers families to navigate their individual health journey by maximising their strengths and abilities which in turn facilitates healing and positive health outcomes (Wells et al., 2014). When caring for people of any age, the whole family needs to be considered where appropriate and culturally sensitive therapeutic conversations need to include the child, caregivers, siblings, and/or extended family (Foster & Shields, 2020; Wonders & Affee, 2024).

Pediatric nurses play a key role in supporting children and families during and after hospitalization and respecting the integral role of family through collaboration, shared decision making, partnership and open, transparent, honest communication, to promote child and family health and wellbeing (Foster et al., 2016; Giambra et al., 2024). Many pediatric nurses espouse using a Family Centered Care approach when working with children and their families. The Institute for Patient and Family Centered Care states Family Centered Care includes four core concepts; respect and dignity, information sharing, participation, and collaboration where the *'planning, delivery, and evaluation of health care is grounded in mutually beneficial partnerships among health care providers, patients, and families'* (Institute for Patient and Family Centered Care, n.d). Through Family Centered Care, families determine how they will participate in care and are viewed as key stake holders in direct care, quality improvement projects, safety initiatives, education, research, service delivery, and policy development (Institute for Patient and Family Centered Care, n.d). To date, four major care approaches inform nursing practice across the life span – Child Centred Care, Person Centred Care, Patient Centred Care, and Family Centred Care with the dual approach of Child and Family Centred Care informing Pediatric Nursing. Critiques, reviews and concept analyses of the various care approaches continue to report unclear definitions, practice, and conceptualisation from both the nurse, child, patient and family perspective (Coyne et al., 2018; Hill et al., 2018; Park et al., 2018). Recommendations for further clarity on these nursing approaches include refining the Institute for Patient and Family Centered Care core concepts to include the care environment, where a person's dignity and humanity are prioritized in policy development and service delivery, and an awareness of the strengths and limitations of the term 'centeredness' for various populations, and settings (Coyne et al., 2018; Hill et al., 2018; Park et al., 2018).

In efforts to clarify how nurses engage with the family, the concept of Family Systems Nursing emerged in the 1980s through the seminal work of Wright and Leahey (1990) (Bell J. M, 2009; Wright & Leahey, 1990). This approach differentiated between nursing focused on the individual as the recipient of care and the family system as the unit of care. Wright and Leahey developed the Calgary Family Assessment Model and Calgary Family Intervention Model, which provide a theoretical foundation for understanding and working with families in healthcare settings (Shajan & Snell, 2019). The focus of nursing care and the concept of family nursing continues to evolve. Researchers across European nations are exploring nursing interventions such as Family Health Conversations, which aim to improve nurses focus on and engagement with the family unit (Broekema et al., 2020; Pusa et al., 2022). In Australia and New Zealand, a focus on cultural safety in nursing care has identified the importance of

drawing forth family strengths in healthcare contexts (Queensland Child and Youth Clinical Network, 2020; Wilson et al., 2022).

Implementing Child and Family Centred Care models requires a clear recognition of the family for the child. Implementation of family in nursing practice vary across different regions and regulatory bodies. The World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (2000) initiated the nurse specialty of Family Health Nurse (World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, 2000). In America the Family Nurse Practitioner is a recognised licensed specialty area of nursing practice (Dreifuerst et al., 2021). Many national nursing regulatory boards, however, do not recognise family nursing as a specialty. Instead, the focus of nursing practice is on family engagement through independent nursing interventions, such as family strengths conversations by critical care nurses in Kenya (Kiwanuka et al., 2023) and nurse-initiated video resources that support the family of individuals with cancer (Coyne et al., 2022). Despite increasing evidence supporting the importance of family engagement in nursing care, the concept of Family Nursing remains contested. While the debate continues, the importance of considering family dynamics and involving families in nursing care remains a crucial aspect of holistic independent nursing practice.

The International Family Nursing Association (IFNA) is a unique organisation of international researchers, academics and clinicians that embrace a compassionate family nursing focus on health, social justice, human dignity and respect for all (International Family Nursing Association, 2024). The organisation provides resources, educational tools, practical guidelines, position statements, webinars and networking opportunities with a goal to improve the nursing care of families across the life span (International Family Nursing Association, 2024). For example, the Family Nursing Series developed by Wright and Leahey in 2019 provides clinical scenarios that demonstrate how to undertake effective family nursing interviews and practice family nursing using the Calgary Family Assessment and Intervention Models (International Family Nursing Association, 2024). In addition, Wright and Leahey provide guidance on communication techniques, intervention skills, reflection, clinical tools, study examples and practical solutions for nurses working across diverse groups and family structures in a variety of practice settings, including primary to critical and end of life care (Shajan & Snell, 2019).

Every two years the IFNA members convene to share knowledge, practices, and skills on family nursing practice, education, research and policy. These conferences serve as a unifying force and voice for advancing family nursing globally. Attendees from across the globe meet to discuss the latest innovations in family nursing practice and learn from one another. Often, these discussions catalyse collaborations resulting in new knowledge and skills. Outcomes from recent conference collaborations include systematic reviews (Spurr et al., 2023), meta-synthesis (Danford et al., 2023), and resource creation such as the [IFNA 2023 Family Measures Project - International Family Nursing Association](#), a compilation of commonly used family measures, guideline development and a family resource for participation in research (Polfuss et al., 2023). Additionally, a group of conference attendees are actively involved in research about nurses' involvement in policy development and in the creation of a policy toolkit to aid nurses in advocating for policy changes to improve patient and family health worldwide.

The upcoming IFNA conference, scheduled for June 17-20, 2025, in Perth, Australia, is yet another opportunity for nurses working with families across the lifespan in clinical practice, education, policy and research to learn from one other. The conference theme is "Promoting Family Strengths Globally in Challenging Times" and will feature keynote speakers from around the world. Attending the conference is one way to stay abreast of innovations in practice and education, learn new knowledge first hand from those involved in creating it, meet and discuss family nursing with like-minded colleagues, and create new collaborations that will result in professional growth and improved

outcomes for patients and their families. As pediatric nurses, we must look for and capitalize on opportunities to advance our own nursing practice and impart the knowledge we've gained to advance nursing for our profession throughout the world. In this way, we can improve the health and well-being of all children and their families worldwide.

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