# GUEST EDITORIAL

## Nurses and Midwives in eHealth

This Special Theme issue of the Journal of the International Society for Telemedicine and eHealth (JISfTeH) serves to recognise, support and advance the important role of nurses and midwives in eHealth and all of health care delivery. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared that 2020 is the 'Year of the Nurse and Midwife' to advance nurses' and midwives' vital position in transforming healthcare around the world.[1] As the largest group of health care workers in the world, nurses and midwives play a vital role in providing health services. These are the people who can exploit the digital health revolution to deliver care over rural distances and urban barriers, caring for basic health needs, chronic diseases and the effects of war and natural disasters. They are often the first and only point of care in their communities. The world needs 9 million more nurses and midwives if it is to achieve universal health coverage by 2030.[2]

The worldwide recognition of nursing and midwifery is timely, in that 2020 is the 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth. Nightingale's book, 'Notes on Nursing,' was published in 1859 and has been a beacon for nursing and midwifery ever since, with its topics such as taking food, light in the wards, cleanliness of rooms and walls, and observation of the sick.[3] The observation chapter is one of the longest and we can perhaps glean some ties to the digital proliferation in health care today. For example, she wrote that nurses, and we include midwives, should be taught what to observe – how to observe – what symptoms indicate improvement – what the reverse – which are of importance and which are of none – which are evidence of neglect.[3] Think of a chronically ill elder in her technology-supported home, or of a woman with a complicated pregnancy who is distant from care. Digital observation by providers is critical for appropriate and timely support and interventions.

ISfTeH – Your Global Partner in Digital Health – has, since its inception, been a strong supporter of nurses in all of their specialties. The Telenursing Working Group (TWG) was organised early in ISfTeH's history and continues to grow today, with more than 165 members representing 47 countries. The TWG's vision is to extend nurses' reach through technology and improve the quality of healthcare delivery worldwide. Its mission is to provide a forum for exchange of knowledge and experiences of nurses and others who are working with or supporting nurses using eHealth applications. Each year, one or two TWG-organised nursing webinars are hosted worldwide. The annual Med-e-Tel conferences included presentations and on-site global web-inars by and for nurses. The annual international conferences co-sponsored by the sponsoring country's telehealth organization and ISfTeH also welcome nursing presentations. The newer annual meeting of ISfTeH, 'Digital Health Global Commons, powered by ISfTeH' continues to be an excellent venue for nursing and midwifery presentations and information sharing.

The Working group of Women (WoW) and the TWG are partners within the ISfTeH context, given that their goals are similar and of course nursing and midwifery are about 90 percent women. WoW develops actions to support and promote the role of Women in the areas of telemedicine and eHealth in the world. It aims to develop collaborations with other WGs, the Journal of the ISfTeH and international partners to make women visible in international conferences and scientific publications.

The idea for this Special Theme Nurses and Midwives in eHealth issue came from the outstanding accomplishments of the WoW leaders, who have published four Special Theme Women in eHealth collections in JISfTeH volumes 3, 5, 6 & 7 with corresponding printed monographs for each of the sets of papers.[4] A call for abstracts was sent out widely to nurses and midwives in early Autumn of 2019[5,6] and five papers were accepted by the organisers for submission to the

JISfTeH editors and review process. While nurses authored these five papers, we acknowledge the work of midwives found in the monographs noted above. For example, the editorial by Cadee and Ali described technology and care by midwives and briefly reviewed research that increases the knowledge and evidence for safe practice worldwide.[7] The paper by Perez-Chavolla et al described six midwifery projects of the Women Observatory for eHealth with the aim of supporting the adoption of information and communication technologies in eight countries.[8] And the paper by Pezaro described the development of an evidence and theory-based design of an online intervention to support midwives in work-related psychological stress.[9]

The five papers in this 2020 issue reflect a wide diversity of eHealth-based interests. The development of a cohort data capture interface using real-time monitoring of breast-feeding indicators for high foetal, neonatal and child risk from birth two years was described by Silva et al. The paper by Bartz looks at nurse-led research more comprehensively to identify and describe research-based evidence for use in clinical nursing practice and education. The papers by Heli et al and Padmalatha et al demonstrate how nurses are facing

the constant in-flow of digital health technology and also what methods can be used to inform and educate nurses to ease the constant change. Well-being technology approaches suggest new ways of using technology, gamification and computational intelligence in addressing the challenges. The paper by Kouri et al describes the Futures Wheel Method as one means by which people in health care can work to anticipate and articulate the future, both for digital technology in all of its health-related applications and for interpersonal communication skills and requirements.

We hope that the papers in this Special Theme Nurses and Midwives in eHealth issue, together with the previous Women in eHealth issues, will be an encouragement to all nurses and midwives to submit their research manuscripts to JISfTeH for review and publication. Guidelines for papers format and submission are on the journal's website (https://journals.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/JISfTeH/issue/view/60). If you are not already a member of the Telenursing Working Group or the Working group of Women, or both, please do join ISfTeH and at least one working group (https://www.isfteh.org/).
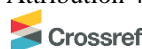
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