MESSAGE FROM THE ASSOCIATE EDITOR

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It is with great anticipation that we launch this inaugural issue of the *Journal of Mental Health and Addiction Nursing*. This opening editorial serves as a call to action for our professional community – one that presents an opportunity for us step forward with our best evidence and thinking to help advance the impact of the work we do for those in need of equitable and timely access to mental health care and services. It is our intention and hope that this journal will serve to spark exchange, deliberation, critique, and debate.

All nurses, in every setting and area of practice, are involved in assessing and responding to the mental health needs of the people and families under their care. What follows is a very brief, simplified, and certainly incomplete, illustration of how and where nurses approach to the care they provide – one that integrates a holistic approach to supporting health and wellness:

- Public health and primary care nurses assess and screen new mothers at risk for post-partum depression.
- Nurses working in emergency departments respond to patients experiencing acute psychotic episodes and overdose.
- Primary care nurses screen for and provide education around substance use and abuse. This includes the misuse of prescription drugs.
- Street health nurses care for people who may be homeless and/or engaging in high-risk behaviours, in part because of an unstable mental illness.
- School nurses assess children and youth for the presence of eating disorders, bullying, and abuse.
- Critical care nurses care for families experiencing grief, loss and shock.
- Medical/surgical nurses care for patients experiencing acute delirium, depression and anxiety.
- Psychiatric mental health nurses often care for individuals who are at risk for self-harm or experiencing suicidal ideation.

The 2006 report authored by Senators Kirby and Keon for the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, *Out of the Shadows at Last: Transforming Mental Health, Mental Illness and Addiction Services in Canada*, helped to position mental health as a priority for action in Canada. Thankfully, the impact of this report, including the establishment of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, has brought about positive increases in awareness and attention to the matter and the reduction of stigma across our society. In the face of this realization, more people and their families are disclosing their experiences to one another and health care providers as they seek care, services and supports.

The past decade has seen a series of paradigmatic shifts that are influencing where, how and by whom mental health care and services are being delivered. These include a movement toward person-centred care, a greater emphasis on evidence-informed practice as a means to reduce variation and optimize quality of care, a deliberate move toward more and better community based care models, an increase in rights-based advocacy for persons and populations experiencing mental health problems and illnesses, and the reorientation of health and social services and supports to drive system transformation in the right direction — one that emphasizes better access, equity, social justice, inclusion, and recovery.

We invite you to join us as we work together to find better ways to achieve better health and care for our populations. Strong nursing leadership across the domains of practice is required to bolster solutions that address existing gaps related to the accessibility, comprehensiveness, appropriateness and effectiveness of mental health care and services. Building on the past contributions, working in partnership with patients and their families, we have many opportunities before us to influence and

shape the transformation of our health systems to better support the people, communities and populations we serve.

It is our hope to publish articles and papers that will help us to collectively achieve a high impact in population heath improvement and health systems strengthening. Potential topics of interest might include:

- How are best practices being implemented and sustained with respect to normalizing evidence-informed care models and practices in the areas of mental health and addiction?
- What innovative approaches are nurses and inter-professional collaborative teams using to assess, plan, implement and evaluate the effectiveness of the care they provide on a daily basis?
- What is being done to better serve those at disproportionately higher risk for developing mental illness?
- What indicators are we currently using to assess and evaluate the impact of practice and policy interventions? What more needs to be done with respect to measuring effectiveness?
- How can we use international comparisons to learn from each other about what is working well in certain contexts, especially as it relates to reducing health disparities and related determinants of health?
- What are the experiences of people living with unmet needs that predispose mental illness or act as barriers to recovery, and more importantly, what solutions can nurses provide to improve these circumstances?

Finally, and on behalf of our editor-in-chief Dr. Lisa Adams, I would like to sincerely thank the editorial board and reviewers for their collaboration and commitment to bring forth a publication that will be worthy of profiling the outstanding contributions that nurses bring to advancing solutions that will serve to strengthen our health systems, services and supports to improve the lives of those affected by mental illness and addiction.