



Future proof

The INMO's new director of professional development Elizabeth Adams is preparing the Organisation for the changes ahead in professional practice. She spoke to **Alison Moore**

ELIZABETH Adams, the INMO's new director of professional development, has had a most interesting and varied career to date, which puts her in a great position to understand and work on behalf of nurses and midwives in Ireland today.

Elizabeth says she never had a career path mapped out for herself, or had a five-year plan, but as opportunities arose she has been willing to rise to the challenge presented. As a result, she has blazed the proverbial trail in policy direction and strategic planning for nursing and midwifery both here in Ireland and abroad.

Elizabeth is an Adjunct Associate Professor with Curtin University of Technology, Western Australia and in addition to a number of national and international awards she was recently conferred an Honorary Fellowship by the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery Royal College of Surgeons Ireland. She trained in the Mater Hospital and worked there for 17 years, most latterly as a theatre superintendant.

During this time she continued to further her education in a number of fields through the RCSI and in 1998 achieved a bachelor of nursing studies degree from DCU. Having decided to undertake a research masters, Elizabeth took an unusual route that turned out to be life changing and enrolled in a post-graduate diploma in statistics at Trinity College Dublin. She completed this at the same time as

the first year of her research masters, also in Trinity, in 2002.

Having a combined background in statistics and nursing research put Elizabeth in a rather unique position and she was seconded to the Department of Health, which was at the time undertaking its first study on nursing and midwifery resource. This was her first change of career direction, away from clinical work and into strategic planning, policy development, implementation and evaluation.

From there, Elizabeth and her husband decided to go to Australia where she had planned to return to clinical work. However, on meeting with the Chief Nurse Prof Phillip Della soon after arriving, she was invited to join his team and ultimately ended up as principal nursing advisor for the State of Western Australia and acting chief nurse as required.

While in the Department in Western Australia she helped to manage significant health reform and was instrumental in establishing the nurse and midwife practitioner role which included medicinal product prescribing.

"My role involved negotiating the smooth passage of the legislation through both houses of parliament and successfully developing and delivering a State-wide implementation and evaluation framework for the expanded scope of practice."

She received the Government of Western Australia Award in recognition of her significant role in enhancing the nursing and midwifery profession and supporting excellence in patient care and health service delivery.

This led to a series of positions that utilised Elizabeth's unique skill set and put her firmly on the path to her current role.

"Due to my experience with the development of the legislation and implementation of prescriptive authority in Australia coupled with the significant difference it made to patient care and the effective and efficient use of the nursing and midwifery resource, I grasped the opportunity to make a difference in Ireland by taking up the post of HSE national director of nursing and midwifery to implement the initiative"

Over a three-year period Elizabeth led the successful implementation of nurse and midwife medicinal product prescribing initiative and then took up the challenge to work for the International Council of Nurses (ICN).

At the ICN in Geneva, for a little over two years as a consultant on nursing and health policy, Elizabeth worked in areas such as socioeconomic welfare, occupational health and safety, positive practice environments, human resource development, violence, international migration, older person care and disaster nursing.

In addition, she was director of the International Centre for Human Resources in Nursing – a unique on-line gateway to tools, standards and information on nursing human resources policy, management, research, and practice.

It's a most impressive CV and on her appointment, INMO general secretary, Liam Doran, said that the experience she was bringing to the post was "unparalleled" and would be "a priceless resource" to the Organisation in the coming years.

New role

At a time when continuing education and professional development are coming increasingly to the fore for every nurse and midwife in Ireland, the role of the INMO Professional Development Centre (PDC) will become more important than ever.

"I'm probably coming home at the most challenging, but equally pivotal, time for the nursing and midwifery professions in Ireland. Although there are many challenges ahead in this current climate, there are also enormous opportunities. Nurses and midwives have opportunities to develop new models of care delivery focused on population needs and leading on prevention and promotion strategies. Periods of economic downturn can be times of innovation for service delivery and dynamic changes in roles and skill mix. Nursing and midwifery are in pole position to give voice to the quality principle and lead the development of new models of care."

Elizabeth hailed the tremendous work of her predecessor Annette Kennedy in relation to the PDC and looked ahead in what is a time of change for the Centre.

"I have to give great credit to Annette Kennedy as she has developed it over the past 20 years from nothing to the very viable and dynamic centre it is today. I think that looking at the Nurses and Midwives Act and all the economic implications and pressures of the times, that now is the time to ensure that nurses and midwives are practising safely and to support them on the frontline to be able to make decisions to ensure safe patient care and to be competent to deliver that effectively."

Safe practice

According to Elizabeth, there is absolutely no doubt that nurses and midwives are under significant pressure to take on "more and more work with less and less resources" and she emphasised that the PDC, through its many safe-practise focused courses, provides significant sup-

port to members, to make appropriate clinical judgements to deliver safe care.

"Nurses and midwives are professionally and legally accountable for the standard of practice to which they contribute. Therefore my current priority is to support those on the frontline to make a clinical judgement in relation to what is safe and what is not safe with regard to patient care," she said.

Leadership network

The INMO recently held its first 'leadership challenge' day (see report page 20-21) where clinical nurse and midwife managers were given an opportunity to develop their leadership skills in a safe environment. The participants were put through a number of unexpected challenges throughout the day that tested their capacity to respond to situations.

"The participants are now part of a new leadership challenge network that will act as a two-way conduit. It will be a place to share information across regions as issues arise and the INMO will offer support by keeping participants informed in terms of professional development issues and through the library services, with up-to-date articles and information.

"The network will also keep the INMO informed of relevant professional development issues in the clinical areas and will assist us to remain grounded in relation to what our members' needs and requirements are and how we can most effectively respond," explained Elizabeth.

Continuing education

While the exact form that An Bord Altranais continuing education requirements for nurses and midwives will take is still undefined, the PDC will aim to offer members a one-stop shop that will make the exercise of keeping practice up to date as painless as possible.

In order to 'future proof' the suite of courses that the Centre already offers, the INMO has explored options in relation to accreditation. One such example is with UCD and the proposed system is that each study day would be endorsed as a recognised pathway to a UCD award. It is proposed that those who undertake a number of INMO courses would be eligible for a professional certificate (5 ECTS Level NQAI 8) award. Following this, participants would have the option to proceed to gain the professional certificate upon completion of a bridging assessment with UCD.

At this juncture, on award of the profes-

sional certificate they would be eligible to apply for 'accreditation of prior learning' for exemptions from a graduate programme (Level 9). This proposal has been approved by the INMO Executive Council for further exploration.

Elizabeth also cites the INMO library as an invaluable resource to members in terms of ongoing education, stating the this value it offers is "worth the membership fee alone".

Global Health Workforce Alliance

As director for the International Positive Practice Environment Campaign, Elizabeth worked directly with Global Health Workforce Alliance (GHWA) during her time with the ICN. Over the past few months she has acted as a 'special advisor' to the Alliance in an effort to secure funding under the European Union Seventh Framework Funding for Ireland.

The research proposal that has been put forward is entitled 'Empowering children and teenagers between nine and 18 to drive healthy lifestyle movements using transformative technologies' and aims to "empower children and teenagers of all backgrounds to use technology to improve their lifestyles with the support and engagement of all influencers and leadership provided by health workers".

The proposed project is focused on three countries Ireland (INMO, UCD and Irish Global Health Education and Innovation), Israel and the Netherlands with collaborating partners such as the GHWA and World Health Professional Alliance.

"The Globalhealth Workforce was seeking a partner to be the lead international organisation to co-ordinate the research. With my experience working on international multiprofessional projects and the INMO track record in delivering initiatives I embraced the opportunity to propose the INMO to be the international lead.

"Our application has been submitted to the European Commission. There is approximately €6 million in funding available if we are successful. Although this type of funding is not easy to secure I am optimistic that we meet the requirements," Elizabeth said.

This is a first for the INMO and even the experience of having applied for the funding is valuable for the future. The outcome of the application should be known before the end of the year.

In uncertain times, it must be reassuring to members to have a person of such experience working on their behalf.