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NESWHE Looking To Change The Way Care Is Delivered

by Ryan Foley

After Georgianna Donadio suffered injuries in a car accident, she spent two years going from specialist to specialist in an effort to determine what was ailing her. During that time, Donadio said, most physicians were unsuccessful in trying to treat and cure her. “No one was addressing me as a human being,” Donadio said. “No one asked, ‘What do you think is wrong? Why do you think you’re not getting better?’ No one asked about nutrition, environment, my spirit. No one addressed the entire person, and that’s sad because whole person care is what nursing is all about.”

Today, after much healing and

soul-searching, Donadio heads up the

New England School of Whole Health Education (NESWHE) in Wellesley, MA, which she founded back in 1977. NESWHE is a private and licensed career-training school. It produces curriculums which integrate scientific and medical research with the wisdom of various spiritual teachings and a natural outlook on healing.

Thanks to over two decades of cooperation with Boston area hospitals, doctors and nurses, NESWHE has developed the Whole Health Education model, which has been identified as a critical missing ingredient in the creation of a whole-person, prevention-focused health care system. This model enables health care practitioners to create mindful and respectful interactions, which are healing for patients, practitioners and all others in the working environment.

“Health care education has traditionally focused on treatment of the disease, not treatment of the patient as a whole human being,” Donadio said. “Our goal is to change all that. We want health care workers to see the whole picture.”

What NESWHE offers

NESWHE offers distance learning classes, as well as those of the classroom variety (these are conducted at Tufts-New England Medical Center in Boston). Both options include features like online support, a toll-free student call-in number, a one-year online medical library subscription, financial aid, career counseling and job placement assistance.

All told, the school has 22 classes in the following curriculums:

- Whole Health Education. This program provides an understanding of the big picture of health, which includes the physical, emotional, nutritional, environmental and spiritual aspects.
- Whole Health Educator program for nurses. This is ideal for the nurse professional who

desires to offer more than symptom-oriented, treatment-oriented care.

- **Enhanced Medical Assisting.** Provides training that focuses not only on traditional clinical and administrative skills, but also on Whole Health Education.
- **Whole Health Skills.** Offers a unique program of study for the health care practitioner who desires a comprehensive understanding of anatomy and physiology, as well as a whole person perspective of how bodily systems relate.
- **Life-Work Coaching.** A program that provides the skills and tools necessary for life-work coaching, including how to maintain health and create personal fulfillment.
- **To Be A Human Being.** This program explores the many influences that impact health, well-being and personal fulfillment.

Within the last few years, NESWHE began offering its curriculum to nurses as continuing education courses. According to MaryAnne Benedict, who is chairman of NESWHE, the response has been positive. Nurses who have completed the courses are excited about the opportunity to grow within their careers, as well as offer better care for their patients.

“People benefit greatly from these courses,” Benedict said. “They’re able to develop and nurture better relationships with their patients, and that’s important when you’re only dealing with patients for a short period of time.”

Elaine Carter, who is a board member for NESWHE, took a nutrition-based course with the school some 20 years ago. She was impressed with NESWHE back then and naturally, still is today.

“The course made me a better learner and more importantly, a better listener. They talk about the whole person and not just the body parts. It’s a different way of teaching health care workers.”

A reinvention of health care

To recruit and retain health care workers, changes to existing health care environments are certainly needed. According to those affiliated with NESWHE, a shift towards treating patients as individuals with equally unique health care needs rather than focusing just on their diseases – along with a willingness to value health care providers for their compassion and caring – desperately needs to take place. This reinvention of health care can only happen through new models of education for health care providers.

“The goal here is to change the entire culture within an organization,” Benedict said.

“The time has come for health care providers to really look at the way they are providing care and how they are managing themselves. Our programs can help them do that.”

According to NESWHE, current studies have shown a direct correlation between patient satisfaction and health care worker satisfaction. So having satisfied patients could certainly help a health care facility in the areas of patient care, staff retention and recruiting.

Over the years, thousands of health care workers and several health care institutions throughout the US have adopted NESWHE’s model and experienced amazing results.

“We can do wonderful things for a facility’s bottom line,” Donadio said. “Whole Health Education was meant to deal with a plethora of problems in the health care field.”

For more information on NESWHE, visit www.wholehealtheducation.org.