

Course charts cultural shift

By AKRAM OMERI

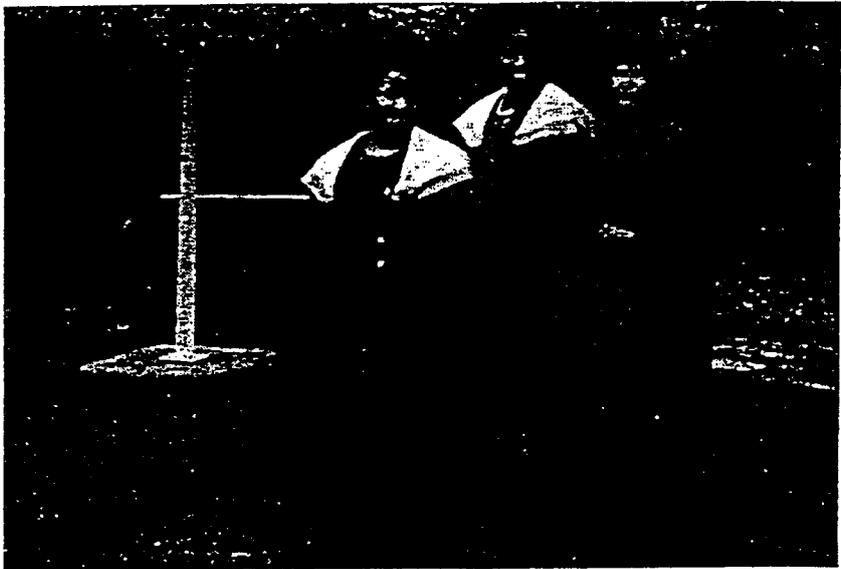
IN the past two decades global trends have shifted nursing's focus away from the ideological focus of multiculturalism towards new understandings of nursing based on researched transcultural nursing taught in academia and applied by nurse clinicians. In addition, the establishment of a Transcultural Nursing Society, by Royal College of Nursing, Australia, reflects a commitment by nurses in Australia to promote excellence in the field.

The University of Sydney's Faculty of Nursing, Cumberland Campus, established courses in transcultural nursing in the early 1990s, and the full-time, eight unit course has had over 100 graduates.

It focuses on culture, ethnicity and social differences, and provides a venue for graduate nurses to study, research and test their own values, beliefs, and practices from a transcultural nursing perspective. Graduate nursing students from specialty areas reflect on the transcultural nursing needs of diverse cultures in Australia.

The course allows students the freedom to choose and study aspects of culture relevant to their field of practice in order to discover, develop, and devise new ways/strategies for the care of clients. Students are introduced to cultural care nursing assessment and encouraged to incorporate their findings in planning care from the clients' perspective in culturally meaningful ways.

The course content is adjusted to suit the needs of different stu-



Transcultural nursing course graduates Johannah Makhwade (left) and Mpule Ditirwa from Botswana with Dr Akram Omeri

dent groups, and is constantly revised according to new trends and students' evaluation.

Culture is addressed in a broad sense to include ethnicity, ageism, gender and race, to a formalisation of theory and research-based knowledge applicable to nursing.

Core issues include: colonisation and health/illness issues in indigenous cultures; global trends; socio-political movements in health care; transcultural nursing theory and practice; ethical and moral issues; mental health; cultural care nursing assessment; and a focus on refugees and torture/trauma survivors.

Nurses are realising their potential to contribute to quality transcultural nursing. The paradigm shift here over the past two decades is towards the understanding that culture underpins and influences lifeways.

Transcultural nursing courses are long overdue in Australia. Short-term workshops and conferences are excellent for sharing transcultural nursing research knowledge, but do not provide the necessary educational skills.

Faculty and students need to gain formal education and research transcultural nursing skills that can be applied to nursing practice. Deans of nursing faculties need to encourage and support interested staff to advance graduate studies in transcultural nursing. This will build the core of qualified doctoral-graduates for supervision of the growing number of students of transcultural nursing.

Dr Akram Omeri is a senior lecturer and transcultural nurse consultant at the University of Sydney Faculty of Nursing