

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***The New England School of Whole Health Education provides Tool to Transform  
the Future of Health Care Delivery***

### **Whole Person Care Program Creates a Renaissance of Relationship-Centered Care**

**Wellesley, MA, April 6, 2004** — NBC News reports veteran nurses are retiring from the profession faster than the next generation of nurses are joining, creating a shortage of these dedicated care givers which threatens the *quality* of American healthcare. “Nurses are working within an unacceptable model of care, focusing on saving money and minimizing services. In conjunction with the advancement of technology and complex procedures and the reduction of time able to be spent with patients, there is a loss of relationship-centered health care which once typified nursing. “The frustration and dissatisfaction this loss creates is shared by the patients as well as the nurses”, explains Dr. Georgianna Donadio, Director of The New England School of Whole Health Education (NESWHE).

“Nurses”, says Donadio, “are the hands and hearts of healing. They serve as the missing link between our need for comfort and caring, and modern medical technology. As human beings, we are emotional and social creatures who require inter-dependent and caring relationships. These components are critical to creating a process which invites us to heal, take responsibility for our health and make better informed lifestyles choices.”

The recently published, 2002, Voluntary Hospital Association (VHA) white paper and statements by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (JCAHO), clearly indicate that finding a solution to the nursing crisis will involve

transforming medical cultures and allowing nurses to get back to the care-giving skills that attracted them to the nursing profession in the first place.

According to Herb Benson, M.D., Director, Mind/Body Clinic at Beth Israel/Deaconess Hospital, Boston, upwards of 60 - 90% percent of visits to doctors and healthcare providers are in the stress-related, mind/body realm where drugs and surgeries do not really help. "Without the relationship-centered aspect of healing", says Donadio, "the process of being invited to participate in our own care and understand the cause and effect of our illness is short circuited."

"At NESWHE, we provide the nurse an opportunity to develop relationship-based skills necessary to take the small amount of time they may have and transform the level of care they provide by creating "moments of meaningful relationship" with their patients. Relationship-centered care is built on a foundation of mindful presence, respectful listening and learning "to be with" rather than "do to" the patient.

To accomplish this vision, NESWHE has created two unique, whole health-focused programs. The NESWHE "Whole Person Care" program is a customized program for hospitals, which allows a medical facility to transform their work culture and work environment through integrating the relationship-centered, whole person care model systemically, which includes non-medical staff as well as nurses. This approach to work culture transformation has demonstrated great benefits for patients, nurses, staff and organization profitability.

By incorporating educational workshops presented at a medical facility with instructional videotaped classes and written curriculum on whole person care, for each workshop participant, the Whole Person Care program aids in transforming the work environment into a culture of caring and heart-centered care giving. The foundation of this program explains that regardless of how much time a nurse or care giver may have with a patient, the most important aspect of time spent is the amount of focus and presence they choose to bring to each patient encounter. This perspective creates compassion and equity between caregiver and patient and puts the purpose of healing into its proper perspective, which is to create an environment for the patient that is without judgment, that is physically and emotionally nurturing, and that does not presume to tell the patient who they are or how they must heal. But rather, recognizes

the innate wholeness and wisdom of each individual, as well as their need to process a meaningful understanding of the communication their illness provides, and the opportunity it presents to experience their authentic self “, furthers Donadio.

The second NESWHE offering, their *Whole Health Education Program for Nurses*, which has been reviewed and endorsed by the American Holistic Nurses Association, integrates an evidence-based, science curriculum with the wisdom of relationship-centered care, creating new skills for caring, healing and patient health education. Whole Health Education® was nominated by Union Hospital, in Lynn, MA, a Partners HealthCare affiliate hospital, for the prestigious national Fetzer Institute’s Norman Cousin’s award for *Best Practice in Relationship-Centered Care*. The Whole Health Education program is a model of whole-person focused, patient health education which is based on mindful listening skills and respectful presence. This model offers the nurse tools to enhance the care she provides for her patients and “offer more than symptom-oriented, treatment-oriented care.” It also brings to the healing relationship the appropriateness and the need for the patient to become a uniquely informed and empowered partner in their healing process.

Donadio explains that incorporated into both programs is a focus of “learning to be present in the moment, putting forth compassion and working with both technical and emotional integrity. This model is a renaissance of the work of Florence Nightingale who had, on the battlefield, only moments to provide medical care and, most importantly, comfort.” She further suggests that “If a nurse, or any care provider, is experiencing stress and anxiety about not having enough time or resources to serve her patients, the result is a diminished quality of care from which everyone in the process suffers. This is what we see manifesting itself in today’s healthcare environments”.

Donadio believes that by incorporating programs such as Whole Health Education and Whole Person Care, into the already required continuing education training for nurses, hospitals and medical facilities will realize a significant reduction in the 47% annual turnover of its nurses, increased job satisfaction and improved staff morale. “Nurses are working in environments which often prevent them from applying all but the clinical skills they learned in nursing school. The philosophical basis and art of nursing is whole-person focused, emphasizing the sacredness of serving the sick with compassion and unconditional presence”, states Donadio, whose early years in health care included practical nursing training. She believes “if something isn’t done to re-

invigorate the work environment for nurses the shortages and attrition rates we see today will only continue to escalate.”

### **About The New England School of Whole Health Education**

Established in 1977, The New England School of Whole Health Education conducts evidence-based, whole health programs focused on relationship-centered care and patient education. Programs include the Whole Health Education for Nurses program, continuing education contact hours for Nurses and Social Workers, a one-year Enhanced Medical Assistant Training, and a Whole Health Educator certificate program. These unique curriculums are provided on-campus, in Boston, or as independent study, instructional videotaped programs. For more information on the NESWHE programs, visit [www.wholehealtheducation.org](http://www.wholehealtheducation.org) or call 1-888-354-HEAL.

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