

Facing key challenges

A new book by Yvonne O'Shea looks at how nursing and midwifery have evolved since the 1998 Report of the Commission on Nursing

THE third book by Yvonne O'Shea, *The Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery in Ireland – Key Challenges for the Twenty First Century*, was launched recently in Dublin. In the book, the author reflects on how the professions of nursing and midwifery have developed since the 1998 Report of the Commission on Nursing. This report dealt with the challenges nurses face in a radically changed world, emerging from the greatest economic crisis in the history of the State, and after the introduction of the Nurses and Midwives Act 2011, the changes in regulation and the increased emphasis on patient safety and protection of the public.

In the book, Ms O'Shea describes the pre-registration and post-registration education system, which exists to underpin the professional status of nursing and midwifery. She also discusses the future of nurse and midwifery education and provides a brief review of international trends.

Having spent 11 years as chief executive of the National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery, Ms O'Shea describes what must happen in order to ensure that the professions continue to develop in line with the needs of the services and in a manner that builds on the achievements of the past.

The book is firmly set in the context of the current political and economic climate and contains a detailed analysis of the programme for government and the reform agenda that is underway. It is in this context that the challenges facing nursing and midwifery are analysed, including: a detailed review of the latest research on chronic diseases; the implications of the national clinical programmes; the latest developments in cancer care; maternity; mental health; intellectual disability; children; care of the elderly; and the role of carers in our society.

Themes in the book include: professional development; patient safety and protection of the public; and leadership.

The book is dedicated to two people. The first is the late Mella Carroll, who as chairperson of the Commission on Nurs-

ing has had a profound effect on the development of the professions in Ireland. All of Ms O'Shea's books highlight the impact of the recommendations of the Commission on Nursing in areas such as education, career pathways, nursing and midwifery management, clinical specialists, advanced practice and research.

The book is also dedicated to Peta Taaffe, the first chief nursing officer in Ireland and a central player in implementing the recommendations of the Commission on Nursing. Peta has an enviable track record in the development of the professions, having been a director of nursing in many clinical settings, perhaps most notably in St James's Hospital, Dublin.

The development of the professions is also a legacy left by the National Council and Ms O'Shea urges the leaders of the services, in particular directors of nursing and midwifery, to keep up the pace of professional development in response to the needs of the service and to build on what has been achieved to date.

Key Challenges for the Twenty First Century deals extensively with the Madden Report published in 2008, 'Building a Culture of Patient Safety'. Ms O'Shea highlights how this report influenced the drafting of both the Medical Act 2007 and the Nurses and Midwives Act 2011. Patient safety and protecting the public is increasingly a central component of clinical accountability.

She gives prominence in the book to the Tallaght Report, published by HIQA in 2012, which is entitled 'Report of the Investigation into the Quality, Safety and Governance of the Care Provided by the Adelaide and Meath Hospital, Dublin, incorporating the National Children's Hospital (AMNCH) for Patients who Require Acute Admission'.

Ms O'Shea states that this is likely to become a landmark report on the quality, safety and governance of healthcare in Ireland. It contained far-reaching recommendations, some of which were specific to Tallaght Hospital, but most were national recommendations to be applied across the entire health services.

The recommendations covered the areas of unscheduled care, scheduled care, board governance, executive management, and planning, accountability and oversight. Nursing and midwifery feature prominently in this report and for the first time, a clear recommendation is made that the voice of the patient at the boardroom table should be represented by nursing and midwifery. The role of the executive nurse/midwife as the advocate for patient safety emerges as one of the biggest challenges facing the professions in the future health service.

Ms O'Shea published her first book in 2008. *Nursing and Midwifery in Ireland: A Strategy for Professional Development in a Changing Health Service* was based on extensive research, involving detailed interviews with over 150 senior figures involved in designing, managing and delivering the health services in Ireland.

Her second book – *Clinical Directorates in the Irish Health Services: Managing Resources and Patient Safety* – traced the origin of clinical directorates, from their inception in the US, and subsequent development in the UK to their introduction in Ireland, first in St James's Hospital and then more widely in the health service. The book highlighted the central role that nursing and midwifery must play in making clinical directorates work for the benefit of patients.

Ms O'Shea's books contain a wealth of research and reference material that will benefit nursing and midwifery researchers for years to come. A brief review of the bibliographical references contained in the books will provide ample evidence of the exhaustive nature of the research that underpins these books. Together, the three books are Ms O'Shea's legacy to the professions.

