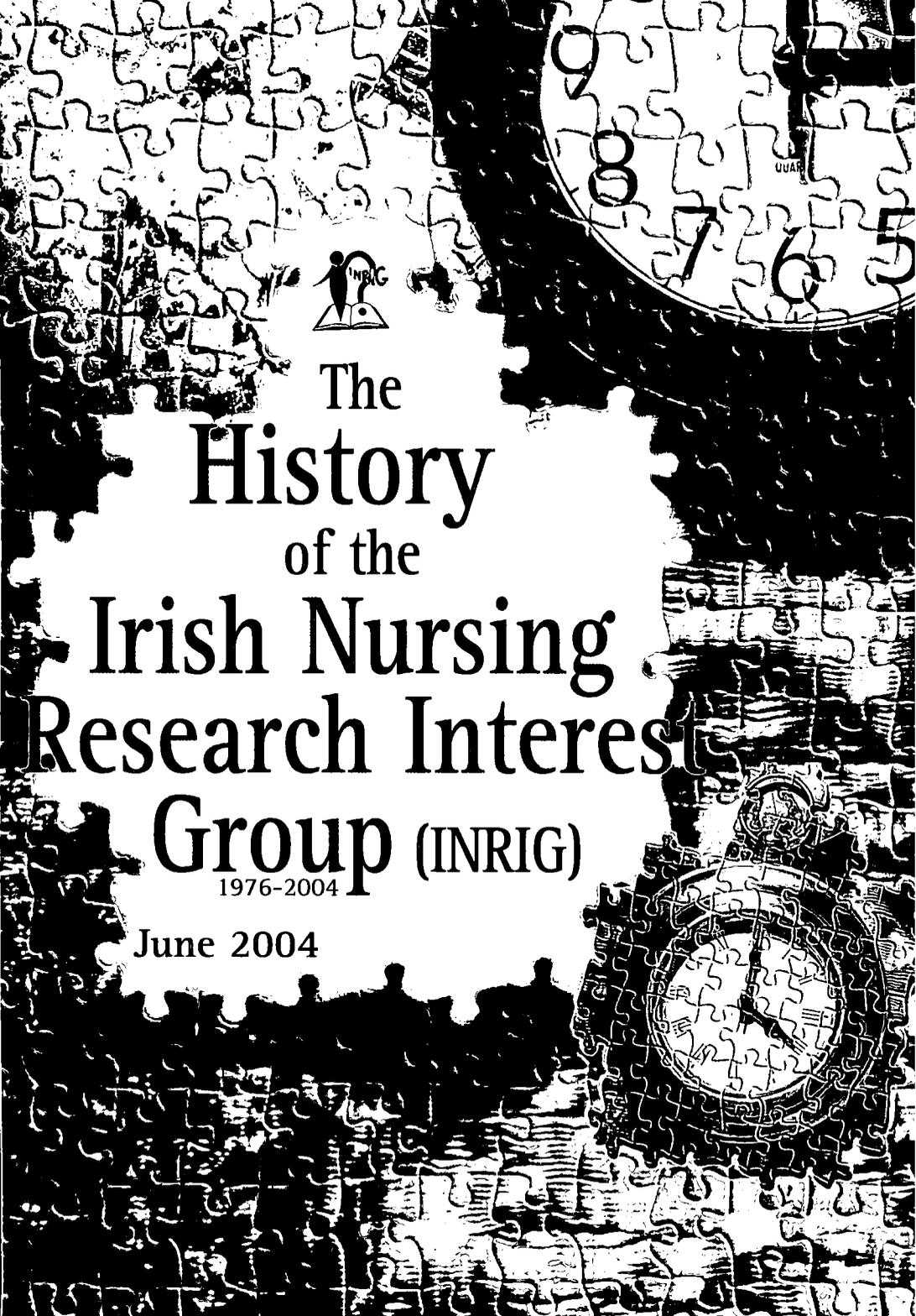




The  
**History**  
of the  
**Irish Nursing  
Research Interest  
Group (INRIG)**  
1976-2004

June 2004





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# Preface

The Irish Nursing Research Interest Group (INRIG) committee members are pleased to present this publication entitled *The History of the Irish Nursing Research Interest Group 1976-2004*, which documents the history of INRIG from its inception in 1976 to its timely dissolution in 2004.

As we advance into the twenty-first century and reflect upon the development of Irish nursing, it is evident that research has increasingly made a significant contribution to both the profession and to the delivery of patient care. Since 1976, visionary and dedicated members of INRIG have endeavoured to advance the nursing and midwifery research agenda in Ireland. INRIG's founding members had a vision for nursing research in Ireland both in terms of the development of the profession and for the effective delivery of evidence-based patient care. Over the years the various committee members worked tirelessly on a voluntary basis to influence the national agenda to realise this vision. Today evidence-based practice is an integral part of service delivery for nurses and midwives and in addition a national research strategy for the profession now exists.

This brief history acknowledges the group's immense efforts and influence in the nationwide evolution of nursing and midwifery research. Specifically, the publication offers the reader a succinct and chronological record of INRIG'S key stakeholders and activities, which were instrumental in creating an awareness and interest in research among Irish nurses and midwives. In publishing this document, we would like to thank all INRIG members both past and present who provided invaluable information and assistance throughout the project. A special tribute must be paid to Professor Geraldine McCarthy and Ms Elaine Lehane, School of Nursing and

Midwifery, University College Cork, who compiled the history, based on primary source materials. A special word of thanks is also extended to Ms Mary McCarthy, Chief Nursing Officer, Nursing Policy Division, Department of Health and Children, who ensured that funding was made available.

This publication spans four decades of commitment to ensuring that research has been included on the nursing agenda. It represents the legacy that INRIG has left in promoting research in nursing and midwifery in Ireland. We believe our task is done and it is appropriate that INRIG now disbands.

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## Introduction

The Irish Nursing Research Interest Group, otherwise known as 'INRIG', was formed in 1976, at a time when research activity within Irish nursing was at a very early developmental stage. Its three founding members – Ms Judith Chavasse, Ms Margot McCambridge and Ms Bridget Tierney – envisaged creating an awareness and interest in research among Irish nurses. Their aim was also to provide fora to facilitate discussion and dissemination of research findings (INRIG Constitution, 1979). This vision was achieved, due to the dedication of many INRIG committees, both national and local, which organised national conferences and research evenings, as well as providing nurses with advice and financial assistance to enable them to conduct research. From INRIG's inauguration to the early 1990s, knowledge of the group and its aims became more widespread. Membership in Dublin increased every year and new branches were formed in Waterford, Galway, Cork and Limerick. By the mid-1990s nursing research was considered an integral element of nursing in Ireland (Fealy et al, 1997). In response to this change in Irish nursing, INRIG, while continuing to facilitate and support the communication and dissemination of research, redirected its focus to policy development and to its role as a lobbying group for nursing research. Evidence of the importance and extent of these activities is apparent in the recommendations made in *The Future of Nurse Education & Training* (An Bord Altranais, 1994), the *Commission on Nursing* (Government of Ireland, 1998), the *Scope of Practice for Nursing and Midwifery* (An Bord Altranais, 2000), and the *Research Strategy for Nursing and Midwifery in Ireland* (Department of Health and Children, 2003). Since its inception INRIG has succeeded in promoting and sustaining an interest in research to such an extent that research has been included on the nursing agenda for the past four decades.

## Constitution of INRIG

Throughout the history of INRIG, many changes occurred with respect to Irish nursing and nursing research. The most significant of these changes included the increasing level of research activity among nurses, as illustrated in the increasing number of degrees conferred and publications produced, the adoption of an androgogical approach to nurse education (An Bord Altranais, 1994) and the establishment of a coherent national strategy for nursing research in Ireland (Department of Health and Children, 2003). In response to these changes, INRIG re-defined and re-drafted its constitution when necessary, to ensure that the group always remained in a proactive position to further the advancement of nursing research in Ireland.

In 1976, Ms Hilary Marchant joined the three founding members, Ms Bridget Tierney, Ms Judith Chavasse and Ms Margot McCambridge, to comprise the first INRIG organising committee, with Ms Bridget Tierney elected as chairperson (Taafe, P., 1999). Recognition is due to these founding members and subsequent INRIG chairpersons (see Appendix A) for their pioneering work and dedication in advancing nursing research in Ireland. INRIG functioned for twenty-one years, between 1976 and 1997, as a voluntary professional group, consisting of ten elected committee members and a fee-paying membership which was open to all registered and student nurses. The efforts of the Dublin based committees were successful in creating an interest in nursing research throughout Ireland, with constituted branches of INRIG forming in Waterford, Cork, Galway and Limerick.

INRIG's original aims and objectives of promoting interest in research among Irish nurses and facilitating discussion and dissemination of research were maintained from its inception to its dissolution in

2004. In 1991 and 1997 new constitutions were adopted and an expansion of the group's aims occurred. During the 1990s the role of the committee became more focused. Activities such as the publication of a newsletter, the organisation of annual conferences, the development of nursing research policies and lobbying for research were pursued (Fealy et al, 1997). For the final six years of its existence, INRIG functioned as a voluntary core executive committee of approximately ten persons without a fee-paying membership.

## Achievement of aims

INRIG used many approaches to achieve its aims and objectives. The main concern of the group was the generation and maintenance of interest in research among Irish nurses. This was successfully accomplished through the organisation of varied activities which included research evenings, annual conferences, short research courses and the publication of a newsletter, as well as the provision of financial support in the form of bursaries to nurses undertaking research.

From an early stage, research evenings became a regular feature of the INRIG calendar of events in Dublin. These were held every six weeks approximately within a Dublin School of Nursing, at which a nursing research paper, report or literature review was presented. Recognition must be given to the nurse tutors who were instrumental in encouraging attendance at research evenings and increasing the overall membership of INRIG. The material for these evenings was initially sourced from publications in the United Kingdom or elsewhere abroad, but was later sourced from Irish nurses who were the recipients of research bursaries and from those who had completed research as part of their BSc or MSc in nursing studies. The papers presented covered a wide range of topics that were of interest to all branches of nursing (general, psychiatry,

intellectual disabilities, midwifery, public health, and sick children). Even though research was a secondary consideration within nursing in the early 1970s, the evening presentations were increasingly well attended over the years, owing to the fact that they afforded nurses an opportunity to discuss research findings, to question nursing practices and to promote evidence-based practice.

While the research evenings were successful in fostering research interest among nurses at a local level, countrywide audiences were attracted to the annual research conferences hosted by INRIG. Initiated in 1987, these events, which were traditionally held in the autumn of each year, quickly established themselves as among the major proceedings on the Irish nursing calendar. Every year, each committee attempted to produce a diverse programme, which reflected current issues in clinical practice, education and management. The promotion of nursing research however remained as the central theme for the majority of conferences. This is evident in the conferences' content and themes chosen, such as 'Nursing United By Research' (1989 Conference), 'Nursing – Rituals to Research' (1991 Conference), 'Nursing Research – The Concern of All' (1994 Conference) and 'Research for Practice' (1995 Conference).

Respected national and international nursing scholars presented their research at the annual conferences, raising the profile and interest of the event each year. INRIG also endeavoured to strengthen its connections with fellow professionals in Northern Ireland and Europe. Links with nurses in Northern Ireland were formed in 1992 and strengthened in 1993 when INRIG and the Royal College of Nursing Research Society of Northern Ireland joined forces to co-host two joint North-South nursing conferences, in Dublin City University and Queen's University in Belfast respectively. Because each group was recognised as being at the forefront in promoting professional development in Ireland and the UK, both events were an outstanding success, with an attendance of upwards

of 300 people on each occasion. INRIG also ensured that at least one member of the committee attended major European nursing research conferences. Irish nurses were subsequently informed of the content of these events via a written report printed in the INRIG newsletter.

Publication of a newsletter was another successful approach used by INRIG to achieve its aims. The newsletter became a means of communication between INRIG and its members, informing them of upcoming events and providing them with information related to current research activity in Ireland. The first of the quarterly newsletters was published in 1991 and each following edition contained the chairperson's report, an editorial comment on current issues, conference reports, book reviews, a letters page and notices of forthcoming events. The newsletter was free to all INRIG members and was on sale to non-members for 50p. In 1997, the quarterly newsletter became the bi-annual news bulletin *Quest*. While the bulletin had a similar content to that of the newsletter, its main aim was to inform members of the group's new strategy and change in constitution, as well as to provide a resumé of INRIG's submission to the Commission on Nursing. In 1998, having accomplished its aim, the *Quest* bulletin was suspended.

Along with achieving the objective of facilitating the dissemination and discussion of nursing research, INRIG was also successful in addressing the practical task of helping nurses to actually conduct research. This was accomplished through the provision of annual research bursaries and short research courses. From the mid-1980s to the late 1990s, bursaries ranging from £50 to £1,000 were awarded by INRIG. The committee and an external assessor judged proposals for the bursary. Topics, which were researched as a result of the financial aid received from INRIG, were related to nurse education, clinical nursing practices, midwifery theory and issues relating to cancer care. As a way of increasing nurse's practical knowledge of the research process, INRIG organised a 'Research Methodology

Course' in 1989. This short course covered the entire research process, from sampling techniques to dissemination of findings and proved to be a well-attended and very successful venture.

In order to achieve its aims after 1990, INRIG increasingly engaged in lobbying and policy development for nursing research. The group made several important submissions on nursing practice, education and research, which have gone some considerable way to influence the development of nursing in Ireland. The most significant of the position statements made by INRIG included such documents as *The Future of Nurse Education and Training* (An Bord Altranais, 1994), the *Commission on Nursing* (Government of Ireland, 1998), and the *Research Strategy for Nursing and Midwifery in Ireland* (Department of Health and Children, 2003). In relation to the first of these documents, the group suggested that an androgogical approach, in a third-level educational setting, would facilitate the development of nursing practice which was more closely aligned to nursing theory and research. Even though it has been a relatively slow process, the realisation of INRIG's recommendations came to fruition in 2002.

With regard to the group's submission to the Commission on Nursing, several issues raised were addressed. These included the need for a coherent national strategy for nursing and nursing research and the development of explicit strategies for nursing research within third-level colleges. In the final report of the Commission, INRIG's recommendations were supported by the Department of Health and Children, with the Commission subsequently acting as the catalyst for the drafting of a research strategy for nursing and midwifery in Ireland. The purpose of such a strategy was to create a national framework for the development, support and promotion of nursing and midwifery research. The establishment of this strategy by the Nursing Policy Division of the Department of Health and Children became therefore a top priority on INRIG's agenda. The group lobbied not only for the formulation

and dissemination of the strategy, but also for nurse representation on the Health Research Board (HRB). The HRB holds responsibility for the facilitation and promotion of health services research. In comparison to other health professionals, nursing had received very little sponsorship for research projects (Department of Health and Children, 2003). It was therefore seen as imperative by INRIG to ensure appropriate representation of the profession at this strategic level. The group, in conjunction with the chief nursing officer and the CEO of the HRB, also lobbied for a nurse advisor to be appointed to the Nursing Policy Division of the Department of Health and Children to further strengthen the profession's case for research support. In 2002, the *Research Strategy for Nursing and Midwifery in Ireland* (two INRIG members sat on the strategy's committee) was published (Department of Health and Children, 2003) and, at present, the nursing profession is represented on the Health Research Board. A nursing research development officer was jointly appointed by the National Council and the Health Research Board in 2002. The focus of the role is as follows

- Building research capacity
- Implementing the Research Strategy for Nursing and Midwifery in Ireland
- Working with the nursing and midwifery planning and development units on the specific recommendations that emerge from the Research Strategy
- Acting as a communications conduit for research-related activities in nursing and midwifery in Ireland
- Building research awareness and activity.

In order to facilitate the development of this role and to increase its profile, special sections of the National Council's website and newsletter are now dedicated to research. The research development officer is also part of the team that plans and delivers the spring and autumn regional meetings organised with the nursing and midwifery planning and development units.

## Summary and conclusion

In 1976, INRIG's founding members recognised the value of research, both for the development of nursing as a profession and for the delivery of evidence-based patient care. At the time many nurses did not know that nursing research in Ireland was non-existent, many indeed were unaware that nursing practice was amenable to research. However, in the quarter of a century since the group's foundation, substantial progress in promoting research has been achieved. Through the enterprising and tireless efforts of several voluntary committees, INRIG not only achieved its original aim of fostering research interest, but it was also instrumental in developing nursing research to its present stage, where clinical practice is evidence-based, a national research strategy is in place and all nurses entering the profession are educated to degree level. As 2004 marks the dissolution of the Irish Nursing Research Interest Group and possibly heralds the end of an era in Irish nursing, its founding members can be content in the knowledge that their vision has helped to create a culture of excellence within Irish nursing.

*This article is based on archival material provided by the INRIG committee during 2003-2004. The material relates to INRIG's key stakeholders, activities (research evenings, research courses, conferences, miscellaneous networking and lobbying), bursaries, research funding and position statements from 1976 to 2004.*

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## Appendix A

### INRIG Dublin chairpersons 1976-2004

1976-1987	Bridin Tierney
1988-1989	Seamus Cowman
1990	Aveen Murray
1991-1993	Gerard Fealy
1994-1997	Eilish Hardiman
1998-1999	Ann Judge
2000-2001	Kathleen MacLellan
2002-2004	Mary McDonnell

## Appendix B

### Chronology of INRIG events 1976–2004

- 1976 Establishment of INRIG (voluntary professional group with a fee-paying membership)
- 1977 First research evening held in a Dublin School of Nursing (six-weekly event)
- 1979 Constitution of INRIG passed
- 1987 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Seminar 'Geriatric Nursing – Recent Advances' held in Beaumont Hospital
- 1988 2<sup>nd</sup> National Conference 'Conflicts In Nursing'
- 1989 First research methodology course for nurses at St Vincent's Hospital
- 1989 Initiation of annual INRIG research bursary awards
- 1989 3<sup>rd</sup> National Conference, 'Nursing United By Research'
- 1990 4<sup>th</sup> National Conference, 'Caring Perspectives'
- 1991 Launch of INRIG quarterly newsletter
- 1991 Formation of Galway branch of INRIG
- 1991 Revision of constitution – lobbying for nursing research as a key function of INRIG included
- 1991 5<sup>th</sup> National Conference, 'Nursing – Rituals to Research'
- 1992 Formation of Limerick branch of INRIG
- 1992 First joint conference with the Royal College of Nursing, Belfast, 'Research Knows No Boundaries'
- 1993 Submission by INRIG (Seamus Cowman) to An Bord Altranais, 'Nurse Education and Training in Ireland' consultative document
- 1993 Second joint conference with the RCN, 'Advancing Knowledge Together'
- 1993 6<sup>th</sup> National Conference, 'Nursing Research – The Concern for All'
- 1994 First research evening of Limerick branch
- 1995 7<sup>th</sup> National Conference, 'Research for Practice'
- 1996 8<sup>th</sup> National Conference, 'Promoting Evidence-Based Practice Through Research'
- 1997 Submission by INRIG on the 'Commission on Nursing'
- 1997 Revision of INRIG's constitution – voluntary professional group without a fee-paying membership
- 1997 9<sup>th</sup> National Conference, 'Research Towards Health and Social Gain'
- 1997 Dissolution of quarterly newsletter and establishment of bi-annual news bulletin *Quest*
- 1997 Lobbying for nurse representation on the Health Research Board and a nurse advisor in the Nursing Policy Division, Department of Health and Children, commences
- 1998 Dissolution of news bulletin *Quest*
- 1998 Submission from INRIG re 'The Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice in Ireland'
- 2000 INRIG members nominated to form part of the consultative committee for the development of a research strategy for nursing and midwifery in Ireland
- 2004 Dissolution of INRIG