Overview of Fields and Sections of Sciences

in the Faculty of Nursing

May 2008
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Introduction

Scholarly activities in the disciplines of nursing and midwifery reflect their young age within the academia in Iceland as well as internationally. The first empirical project carried out by an Icelandic nurse took place in the late 1970s. In the mid-eighties several projects had been initiated and now some 20 years later the academic work carried out in the of Faculty of Nursing is comparable to academic activities within the University of Iceland and abroad. Publications of the faculty in internationally peer-reviewed journals did increase by 60% between the periods of 2001-03 and 2004-06. The average of research points in 2006, according to the point evaluation scheme of the University of Iceland, was 30 research points on the basis of full-time positions, and had increased by 62% since 1999.

The Faculty of Nursing at the University of Iceland is organized into fields of sciences and sections. The fields of sciences and some of the sub-sections are: Family Nursing, Mental Health, Home Care, Sexual and Reproductive Health, Nursing Care of Children and Families, Rehabilitation Nursing, Psychiatric Nursing, Nursing Care of Surgical Patients, Nursing Care of Chronically ill Adults, Nursing Administration, Oncology Nursing, Nursing Informatics, Geriatric Nursing, Antenatal Care, Obstetrics, Postpartum Care, Sociology of Health, Physiology, Embryology and Nutritional Sciences.

Each field of science is led by a director who has a leading role in the pursuit of knowledge. The director shapes and develops policy to promote and empower research activities; encourages establishment of research groups, participates in interdisciplinary and international research, advances teaching methods, has responsibility for teaching at all levels of study, introduces and implements new knowledge and participates in policy making in health institutions.

This document contains descriptions of a selection of research activities within the fields of sciences and sections in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Iceland over the last few years and reflects work until May of 2008.

Helga Jónsdóttir, Professor
## Fields of Sciences

### Field and Sections of Science in the Faculty of Nursing

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Using knowledge discovery to identify potentially useful patterns in family nursing  
Family health, prevention and health promotion  
Families living with acute and chronic diseases and/or dealing with crisis  
Minority families / Transcultural families  
Dysfunction/violence in families | Brynja Örlygsdóttir, Assistant Professor  
Erla Kolbrún Svavarsdóttir, Professor |
| **Mental Health** | Marga Thome, professor |
| Mental health education (professions and the public)  
Community mental health  
Women / families of childbearing age dealing with psychological, developmental or mental diseases  
Infants with dysfunctional behaviour | Jóhanna Bernharðsdóttir, Assistant Professor  
Marga Thome, Professor |
| **Home Care** | Kristín Björnsdóttir, Professor |
| Nursing care of people with functional problems  
Nursing care related to the skin and perceptions  
Home, technology and well-being  
Collaboration with family members | Kristín Björnsdóttir, Professor |
| **Sexual and reproductive health** | Sóley S. Bender, Associate Professor |
| Sexual education  
Sexuality education  
Sexual and reproductive health services  
Reproduction | Sóley S. Bender, Associate Professor |
| **Nursing Care of Children and Families** | Guðrún Kristjánsdóttir, Professor |
| Neonatal and infant nursing  
Nursing care of toddlers and pre-school children  
Nursing care of school-aged children, adolescents and youth  
Nursing care of parents and families  
Neonatal intensive care nursing | Helga Lára Helgadóttir, Assistant Professor  
Guðrún Kristjánsdóttir, Professor |
| **Rehabilitation Nursing** | Póra B Hafsteinsdóttir, Assistant Professor |
| Rehabilitation nursing for individuals  
Nursing care for people with neurological diseases | Póra B Hafsteinsdóttir, Assistant Professor |
| **Psychiatric Nursing** | Jóhanna Bernharðsdóttir, Assistant Professor |
| Acute psychiatric- and post traumatic stress nursing  
Nursing care for people with addictions  
Children and adolescence psychiatric nursing  
Liaison nursing and guidance  
Mental health nursing for women and particular risk groups  
Rehabilitation and geriatric psychiatric nursing | Helga Sífljónsdóttir, Assistant Professor  
Páll Biering, Associate Professor  
Jóhanna Bernharðsdóttir, Assistant Professor |
| **Nursing Care of Surgical Patients** | Herdis Sveinsdóttir, Professor |
| Gender and health  
Nursing care of patients with wounds  
Preoperative nursing  
Postoperative nursing  
Postoperative discharge patient education  
Nursing care related to change in body image  
Nursing care of organ donors/recipients  
Nursing care of patients in acute pain | Ásta Thoroddsson, Associate Professor |
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Theoretical underpinnings of family nursing are taught both at the undergraduate and the graduate level. Courses in advanced clinical family nursing practice are taught at the masters and the doctoral level and methodological issues regarding family nursing research are taught and discussed within courses at the master level and in seminars within the doctoral program. Knowledge development within family nursing is based both on quantitative and qualitative research approach. The main focus of research among faculty members and graduate students within family nursing has been on developing and testing family nursing interventions among families dealing with chronic illnesses. Those research projects have also been developed and worked on in a close relationship with practicing nurses in variety of different clinical areas within Landspitali-University Hospital and in collaboration with community health nurses and midwives working within different clinical locations in Iceland. The main goal of conducting national as well as international research within family nursing at the UI, is to bridge the gap between theory and practice, to develop new knowledge, to apply new research results into clinical practice and in that way to offer evidence based health care service.

Selected Publications


Within the field of home care nursing the enhancing teaching in the area both at the graduate and undergraduate level has been a major challenge. A clinical course is offered in the fourth year of the BS program and one course is taught within the community health track at the advanced practice level. Three master students have chosen this area for their research projects. In addition two students in gerontological nursing used home care data from the RAI instrument to address theoretical questions related to place of living and the transfer to nursing homes. The research in this field so far has been qualitative and has addressed policy issues. A study named Nursing at home: The needs and outlook among patients living at home was granted a three year grant by the Icelandic Science Foundation. The study had two main aims. In the first place it aims at describing the social and environmental conditions, feelings of well-being or lack thereof and daily life of those individuals who live in a home were an individual needs considerable assistance due to sickness, disability or age related health problems. In the second place the aim of the study is to analyze practices among home care nurses related to the organization of nursing services in the above homes. The research method used was qualitative, and authors (mainly sociologists) who employ an ethnographic approach have primarily been consulted. The theoretical basis of the study was feminist and post structural. In the analysis emphasis was placed on identifying meanings embedded in various discourses noticed in the research materials. The field-notes and transcribed interviews were the primary data in the study.

Selected Publications
Gottfreðsdóttir, H. Sandal, J. og Björnsdóttir, K. (In review). This is just what you do when you are pregnant’: A qualitative study on prospective parents in Iceland who accept nuchal translucency screening. Midwifery
Björnsdóttir, K. (In review). Hvenær er heimilð besti kosturinn? Áherslur í uppbyggingu heimahjúkrunar. Tímarit hjúkrunarfræðinga,
Björnsdóttir, K. (2002). From the state to the family: Reconfiguring the responsibility for long term nursing care at home. Nursing Inquiry, 9(1), 3-1
Antenatal care is one of the main areas within midwifery. It refers to preparing parents to be for changes in their life following pregnancy and childbirth, prevention of and detection of complications that can accompany this period and provide support, care and suitable intervention. Development in midwifery knowledge aims at supporting normal progress of pregnancy with acknowledgement of complex and diverse socio-economic, cultural and medical factors influencing every aspect of an individual’s life, including their needs and expectations with regards to health care and childbirth.

This area of research is at a preliminary state within the Department of Midwifery. Within the antenatal care the focus in recent studies has been on prospective fathers and their experience of the antenatal period, antenatal education and decision making in fetal screening (Gottfreðsdóttir, 2005). New practice in fetal screening, nuchal translucency screening has had an affect on service delivery and professional role of midwives. Most recent studies have shown that this is a complex issue which is often shaped by lack of knowledge and ethical dilemma of parents to be (Gottfreðsdóttir, 2006; Gottfreðsdóttir, Björnsdóttir & Sandall, 2008). The result from these studies will inform the policy and practice on fetal screening in the Icelandic context.

Recently a research plan was implemented in cooperation with the Primary Health Care in Reykjavik to implement acupuncture for women with pelvic pain during pregnancy. The intervention has already been pre-tested and is now offered to all women who are suitable for the treatment (Stefánia Guðmundsdóttir & Helga Sigurðardóttir, 2006).

Selected Publications
Helga Gottfreðsdóttir, Jane Sandall, Kristín Björnsdóttir. (2008) This is just what you do when you are pregnant: a qualitative study of prospective parents in Iceland who accept nuchal translucency screening. *Midwifery* (YMIDW_704.)
Guðrún Kristjánsdóttir, Margrét Eyþórsdóttir and Helga Gottfresdóttir. (2005). Prospective parents involvement in antenatal classes in an Icelandic setting: a randomized clinical population study. (óbirt handrit)
Midwifery with a Focus on Care in Labour and Birth

Dr. Ólöf Ásta Ólafsdóttir Assistant Professor

The field of research is within midwifery with a focus on care in labour and birth. It includes using ethnography and narrative qualitative research to explore the culture of childbirth and midwifery in Iceland in relation to place of birth, ideology and developments of different types of midwifery knowledge, especially in relationships between midwives and women. Ethnographic narrative studies have been carried out to explore storytelling of Icelandic midwives working life (Ólafsdóttir, 2006) as well as birth stories of mothers and fathers (Pétursdóttir, 2006, Helgadóttir, 2006 Guðmundsdóttir, 2007). Until recent decades, midwifery has been based on experiential rather than academic learning. Much of midwifery knowledge is therefore practical or tacit knowledge that has been transmitted and learned by telling birth stories (Ólafsdóttir and Kirkham, 2008). Research findings (Ólafsdóttir, 2006) suggest that Icelandic midwives have a common philosophy of care that is associated with a midwifery partnership model, women centred care, incorporated in the ideological statements of the Icelandic midwifery education in Iceland (Ólafsdóttir, 1995). Information has been gathered about inner knowing of midwives, intuition and spiritual awareness in midwifery practice. The “act of being with” or yfirseta “sitting over” at birth has been identified as being crucial for preserving and developing this kind of midwifery knowledge. Three different types have been identified; one developed by learning from practice experience, second is more of spiritual nature, even transcendence. The third type links to connective ways of knowing and reflects the descriptions of intuition as inner connectedness between the midwife and the woman. Descriptions of this type of knowing suggests that it contains elements of the other two types overlapping, enhanced by ways of connective knowing as a whole, between the midwife and the women and in balance with different kind of knowledge systems (Ólafsdóttir, 2006, Ólafsdóttir, 2008).

Selected Publications


Nursing Administration

Dr. Helga Bragadóttir Assistant Professor
Birna G. Flygenring Assistant Professor
Hrund Sch. Thorsteinsson Assistant Professor

Nursing administration is the nursing discipline that integrates nursing science, leadership science, business principles, organizational behaviour, and resource management for nurses to participate as full partners in managing and leading health care organizations. Nursing administration links patient health, care needs, nursing resources and the nursing care processes to the context of health care systems, as well as the social, political and cultural environment of care. Each of these elements as well as their interactions is the area of research in nursing administration at The University of Iceland Faculty of Nursing. Research of faculty and graduate students has been on patient safety and quality of care, resource utilization, human resource management, innovations and leadership.

Main programs of research at present are on job satisfaction and retention of nurses and safety in health care, looking at ways to improve the use of knowledge and skills of Registered Nurses and assistive personnel as well as improved use of technology in health care. Recent and ongoing research in the field of nursing administration pertain to nurses’ job satisfaction and retention (Birna Flygenring, 2005), quality of care and patient satisfaction (Bragadóttir, 1999; Bragadóttir & Reed, 2002; Guðrún Kristjánsdóttir, Helga Bragadóttir & Herdís Gunnarsdóttir, 2005; Helga Bragadóttir, Guðrún Kristjánsdóttir & Herdis Gunnarsdóttir, 2006; Helga Bragadóttir, Ragnheiður Sigurðardóttir, Herdís Gunnarsdóttir, Auður Ragnarsdóttir & Anna Ólafía Sigurðardóttir, 2007), career development of nurses (Helga Bragadóttir, 2002; Helga Bragadóttir & Lilja Stefnásdóttir, 2007; Sigrún Gunnarsdóttir & Helga Bragadóttir, 2007) and innovations in nursing (Bragadóttir, 2008; Helga Bragadóttir, 2006).

Selected Publications


Nursing care of the adult surgical patient

Dr. Herdís Sveinsdóttir prófessor

The aim of theory and teaching within the field of adult surgical patient is to deepen knowledge, skills and understanding of nursing care for these patients and their families. Patient's experiences, evidence based practice, patient education, nurse patient interactions as well as development of comprehensive and specific nursing intervention is the main focus of research. The relationship between working environment, occupational health and patient outcome has also been a focus of studies conducted by faculty.

Selected Publications


Herdís Sveinsdóttir (Ed) *Nursing Care of Surgical Patients* (in Icelandic). (2007). Reykjavík: Institute of Nursig Science at the University of Iceland and the University Hospital.


Nursing scholarship on children and their families focuses on children of all ages, from infancy through adolescence, and their families facing acute or chronic illness, health risks and challenges, diseases as well as on promoting health and preventing injuries, disease and illness in children – individuals, families and the public. The scope of research is diverse and is based on theories and methods that are in the broader fields of developmental research within nursing and the social, humanities and biological sciences.

Nursing care of children and families has a holistic perspective and the focus is on the broad aspects of the child, their families, and communities, including physical, psychological, social and spiritual domains.

Nursing scholarship as well as practice in paediatric nursing involves understanding the complex and interrelated aspects of each child, as well as the ecology of their experiences and their families – being, belonging and becoming (Kristjánsdóttir & Miles, 2000). Nursing scholarship in this field has increased rapidly over the past decades, although the number of studies remains low in comparison to the need. The broad scope of scholarship and the increasing clinical as well as theoretical specialization propose challenges to the holistic perspective. The emphasis is thus on the developmental science perspective along with the traditional nursing scholarship approach in local as well as international context of research and scholarly collaboration. Studies pertaining to the adaptation of parents to their role in the caretaking of their child – well or sick, as well as the challenges facing the child itself are the urgent scholarly challenges of the nursing care of children and their families at the University of Iceland. The studies pursued look for the knowledge to the best approach to creating the most suitable and nurturing conditions to develop in, as well as confronting the challenges of intrusive approaches to their limitations and illness such as pain, isolation etc.

**Selected Publications**


Guðrún Kristjándóttir og Helga Bragadóttir (2001). Þarfir foreldra barna á sjúkrahúsum [Research related to the needs of parents of hospitalized children]. *Tímarit hjúkrunarfræðinga* [The Icelandic Journal of Nursing], 77(2) 89-96.


Nursing Care of Chronically Ill Adults

Dr. Helga Jónsdóttir Professor
Dr. Þóra Jenný Gunnarsdóttir Assistant Professor

Nursing practice that meets complex and comprehensive needs of people with non-curable and life-long disease and their families is one of the main tasks in modern health care. Living life fully, self-care and partnership are key concepts. Knowledge generation that supports this practice needs a multi-dimensional approach. In the Faculty of Nursing qualitative research on the illness experience has been used as ground to develop several interventions and service programs, particularly primary nursing and nurse-managed outpatient clinics. The experience of people with lung diseases has been the main focus of the qualitative studies revealing the general experience as "isolation and being-closed in" (Jonsdottir, 1998). For women repeatedly relapsing to smoking "being caught in a spider web" was overarching (Jonsdottir & Jonsdottir, 2007) and for families using home ventilators "mixed blessing: life-saving treatment – meaningless exertion" was the main theme (Ingadottir & Jonsdottir, 2006a). Practice approaches to assist living with the lung disease have been developed grounded in partnership that centers on the relational core of nursing and with dialogue as the means (Jonsdottir, Litchfield & Pharris, 2003, 2004; Jonsdottir, 2007; Litchfield & Jonsdottir, 2008).

A comprehensive smoking cessation treatment (Jonsdottir, Jonsdottir, Geirsdottir, Sveinsdottir & Sigurdardottir, 2004; Jonsdottir & Jonsdottir, 2001), support intervention based on partnership and adjusted to lung patients (Ingadottir & Jonsdottir, 2006b, 2007) and an empowering educational intervention for people with diabetes (Sigurdardottir & Benediktsson & Jonsdottir, 2007) are some of the interventions that have been developed. Reflexology as one of the key complementary therapies was first studied to develop the methodology (Gunnarsdottir & Jonsdottir, 2007) and later to test it with women living with fibromyalgia (Gunnarsdottir, 2007). The intervention studies have laid basis for service forms with particular relevance for chronic illness. Primary nursing for lung patients was the starting point (Jonsdottir, 1999). Lately, out-patient care has gained an increasing emphasis (Jonsdottir in press, Ingadottir & Jonsdottir, 2007).

Selected Publications


Nursing Informatics

Ásta St. Thoroddsen Associate professor
Dr. Connie Delaney Professor
Dr. Brynja Örlygsdóttir Assistant Professor

Nursing informatics is a specialty that integrates nursing science, computer science, and information science to manage and communicate data, information and knowledge in nursing practice. Nursing informatics supports patients, nurses and other health care providers in their decision-making in all roles and settings. The goal of nursing informatics is to improve the health of individuals, families and populations by optimizing information management and communication. These activities include the design and use of informatics solutions and/or technology to support all areas of nursing, including but not limited to the direct provision of care, establishing effective administrative systems, managing and delivering educational experiences, and supporting nursing research.

Research and developmental projects worked on for the last five years address implementation and use of standardized nursing languages, such as NANDA-I, NIC and NOC, in clinical practice. They have also addressed the development of the electronic health record.

Selected Publications


Mental health during Childbearing

Family, Maternal and Infant Health
Dr. Marga Thome Professor

Maternal child nursing during childbearing is family oriented and is related to nursing and midwifery. One of several key concepts in this discipline is transition to parenthood and psychosocial adaptation. In recent years knowledge has been developed that enables nurses and midwives to promote perinatal mental health.

Topics of research are related to antenatal- and postpartum perinatal mental health, disregulations of early infancy and breastfeeding (see publications, English).

Participation in and/or leading of current studies:
1. A descriptive, longitudinal study of Icelandic women’s mental and their children’s health from pregnancy to five years of age (interdisciplinary study)
3. Evaluation of a theory-based approach (Solihull Approach and Family Nursing) in the well-child care of children aged 0-5 years.

Selected Publications
Reprinted with permission of Blackwell Publ. Ltd. in MIDIRS, midwifery Digest 15:3, 2005
Oncology Nursing

Dr. Sigríður Gunnarsdóttir Assistant Professor

At the University of Iceland, Faculty of Nursing, the aim of cancer nursing is to achieve the integration of theory and practice in clinical practice, education and research. The goal is to improve nursing care of individuals with cancer and their families, improve the knowledge of cancer nurses and to further knowledge in the field of cancer nursing. Cancer nursing is taught both at the undergraduate and graduate level. Research in cancer nursing has been developing in recent years, has mostly been quantitative and focused on providing the basis for further research by developing instruments and conducting descriptive studies. The main focus of research has been on quality of life, symptom experience and symptom management, psychological effects of disease and treatment, family needs, and use of complimentary and alternative methods. Efforts have been made to build interdisciplinary collaborations and to establish international connections through collaboration in multi-cite international research programs. Both education and research has been conducted in close collaboration with specialists at Landspitalinn-University Hospital.

Selected Publications


The main objectives of the Academic field of Psychiatric Nursing are to provide students with outstanding teaching and clinical teaching environment and to promote and foster interest in psychiatric nursing and psychiatric nursing research both among students and practicing nurses. Emphasis is laid on linking theory to practice, for instance, with developmental projects for the benefit of psychiatric nursing practice, preparation of nurses to become preceptors for undergraduate students and to recruit and interest nurses into a Masters and a Ph. D. programs. Monthly research seminars are held and faculty members provide formal and informal consultation to nurses working in clinic who are involved in research and developmental projects. Active participation of nurses in seminars and lectures arranged by the Center for Research in nursing at the Faculty of Nursing is encouraged. Faculty members conduct research projects in close proximity to practice and the main research areas and research projects are the following: psychiatric and mental health needs of children and adolescents, the experience of living and dealing with a bipolar disease on a daily basis, the need and development of the role of Psychiatric Consultation Liaison Nursing, research on youth violence, social and mental health needs of Icelandic dual diagnosis patients, implementing and researching the care towards families acute psychiatric units, patients and staff attitudes towards supervision of patients in an acute psychiatric unit and research on factors that influence adolescent alcohol abuse in Iceland.

Selected Publications
The Rehabilitation Nursing Program focuses on research, education and training of nurses caring for patients who need rehabilitation and aims to increase nurses knowledge in evidence based care in rehabilitation nursing of patients, focusing on physical, psychological and social needs of the patients and partners/carers. A Rehabilitation Nursing Diploma Program is currently running with several modules focusing on rehabilitation nursing. The program is a master’s level program and as such it may form a part of Masters Degree in Nursing. Within this field of science there exist close research collaboration with the Rudolf Magnus Institute of Neurosciences, University Medical Center Utrecht and the Julius Center for Health Sciences and Primary Care, University Medical Center Utrecht, Utrecht, and the Nursing Science Department, Utrecht University, in the Netherlands. The following are ongoing projects with consequent papers in process:

1. Nursing Rehabilitation Guideline Stroke. The Nursing Rehabilitation Guideline Stroke is being developed and nearly finished in an international collaboration.
2. Research on nutritional status of neurological patients and patients with stroke: Nutritional status of Neurological Patients and Patients with stroke. This study was conducted at the departments of Neurology and Neurosurgery at the University Medical Center Utrecht.
3. Clinical Nutritional Nursing Guideline: This guideline was developed in an international collaboration with the Dutch group of nurses and forms a part of the Nursing Rehabilitation Guideline Stroke (above).
6. Early Detection of Post Stroke Depression: This is a PhD-study will be conducted at 12 hospitals.
7. Task oriented training in the nursing care of patients with stroke: This is a PhD-study. Three systematic reviews have been written and preliminary studies are being conducted.
8. How do stroke patients spend the day at a rehabilitation unit in a nursing home? This is observational study was conducted in a Dutch nursing home.
9. The Patient Health Questionnaire 9 (PHQ-9) Reliability and Utility by nurses in a rehabilitation setting. This study is ongoing in a Dutch rehabilitation setting.

Selected Publications
Sexual and Reproductive Health

Dr. Sóley S. Bender Associate Professor

Sexual and Reproductive health implies that people are able to have a responsible, satisfying and safe sexual life and that they have the freedom to decide if, when and how often to have children. Implicit in this are the right of men and women to sexual and reproductive health services and be informed of and to have an access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of fertility regulation of their choice. Also to have the right of access to appropriate health care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant. Research in this field can pertain to any aspect of this definition. The most recent studies have focused on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services for young people and the effectiveness of contraceptive counselling. A national randomly based study was conducted in 1996 about the attitudes of young people towards sexual and reproductive health services (Bender, 1999; Bender & Kosunen, 2005). This study has lead to several other studies among young people about SRH services. Most of them have been based on focus groups (Árni M. Haraldsson & Ólafur G. Skúlason, 2006). The results from these studies have been used in Iceland for the development of youth services (Sóley S. Bender, 2006). Part of the national study was repeated in 2007 among a convenient sample of young people attending a central clinic in Iceland about sexually transmitted diseases (Sigrún B. Hafsteinsdóttir & Sigrún Ingvarsdóttir, 2007). The randomly based national study from 1996 is planned to be repeated in the fall of 2008. During April 1999 until May 2000 a randomized controlled trial (RCT) was conducted among abortion applicants to study the effectiveness of contraceptive counselling (Bender & Geirsson, 2004). The study led to changes of the provision of contraceptive counselling for women post-abortion at the National University Hospital. A counselling model is being developed based on the interviews with abortion applicants. Recently a research plan was conducted to follow-up on the RCT (Sigrún H. Baldursdóttir, 2007).

Selected Publications


Bender, S. S. (1999). Attitudes of Icelandic young people toward sexual and reproductive health services. Family Planning Perspectives, 31(6), 294-301.


Sociology of Health and Illness

Dr. Rúnar Vilhjálmsson Professor

The field of Sociology of Health and Illness (Medical Sociology) includes the research areas of social epidemiology (social distribution of disease, disability, malfunctioning, and illness, and associated risk factors), life-stress, coping and health, health-risk and health-protective behaviours (life-style), chronic illness and its ramifications, utilization of health services, professions and occupations within health care (their development, characteristics, and relationships), and organization of health services (health systems).

Selected Publications


