



## ELIZABETH D. CARLSON PHD, MPH, APRN-BC

GERONTOLOGICAL NURSE PRACTITIONER &  
CLINICAL SPECIALIST IN COMMUNITY HEALTH NURSING

### CURRENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

Dr. Elizabeth Carlson received initial funding, with co-investigators Dr. Mary Dyck and Dr. Susan Kossman, for the Rural HealthNet Initiative titled, *Leveraging Gerontology Expertise to Reduce Health Disparities in Rural Elders*. The Rural HealthNet Initiative focuses on a wider dimension of health care services than telemedicine, including clinical approaches to health promotion and non-clinical approaches such as the education of health professionals. As such, telehealth provides a venue for reducing geographic and cultural disparities in health care delivery and offers the potential for access to quality care for vulnerable elder populations.

Carlson is also involved in several other projects that span population and individual health. These include research projects focused on developing the concept of social capital for community health, understanding cultural variation of distress in cancer patients, and building public health nursing infrastructure with Logan County Public Health Department.



### RESEARCH INTEREST

Dr. Carlson's research career is influenced by the ecological model of health, which focuses on the contextual influences of cancer, culture, and health disparities. Her passion for research is grounded in the tenets of community-based participatory research, which focuses on the cultural aspects of participatory engagement and active learning strategies necessary for behavioral change. This passion has led her to develop an interdisciplinary team representing nursing, public health, anthropology, sociology, communication theory, and neuroscience. A more recent interest places all this work within a new paradigm of science known as complexity theory.

### RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Dr. Elizabeth Carlson initiated her research career during her Master's program. Her thesis looked at translation methodology of survey instruments in a Mexican American population. She was awarded a 3 year, pre-doctoral fellowship in Cancer Prevention and Epidemiology through the University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center funded by the National Cancer Institute (PI: Robert M. Chamberlain). Her dissertation research was titled, *A Focused Ethnographic Study of Community Social Capital*. After she earned her doctoral degree from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston School of Nursing, she stayed with M.D. Anderson Cancer Center and was awarded a 3-year post-doctoral fellowship to continue her work. Her post-doctoral research project, *Application of Social Capital as a Risk Factor Construct in Cancer Disparities Research*, was again funded by the National Cancer Institute. During her post-doctoral research, she also worked on a qualitative analysis team to understand symptom management in blood and marrow transplantation (BMT) cancer patients (PI: Marlene Z. Cohen). She currently serves as a reviewer for the journals, *Research in Nursing & Health*, and *Qualitative Health Research*.

## AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

- 2005 Fellow, Cancer, Culture and Literacy Institute, Moffitt Cancer Center, Tampa, FL
- 2004 NCMHD Health Disparities Scholar, National Center on Minority Health & Health Disparities Loan Repayment Program
- 2004 Millie A. Field Research Award, University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, School of Nursing
- 2003 Outstanding Community Service Award, University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, Department of Community and Educational Outreach
- 1998 Women's Travel Scholarship Award, University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, Committee on the Status of Women
- 1998 Clinical Excellence Award, Harris County Medical Society Auxillary

## EDUCATION

Dr. Carlson began her nursing career in 1994 when she earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHSCH), School of Nursing. She pursued advanced degrees at the same institution earning a dual Masters in Nursing as a Gerontological Nurse Practitioner and a Masters of Public Health in Community Health, completing this degree in 1997. Her doctorate was earned at the same UTHSCH, School of Nursing, completing her dissertation in 2003. Her doctorate was originally awarded as a Doctor of Nursing Science degree, which was later changed to a PhD designation to emphasize the research emphasis of the program. However, Carlson considers this change as reflecting the best of both worlds, to have had a research intensive education focused on clinical practice.



## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Upon completion of her B.S.N., Dr. Elizabeth Carlson assumed the role of a staff nurse/charge nurse on a telemetry unit at Kingwood Plaza Hospital in Kingwood, Texas. She soon moved on to a position as a Clinical Field Coordinator at the UTHSCH's Center on Aging and then worked nights as an intravenous therapy nurse with American Pharmaceutical Services, Inc. to support her through graduate school.

Carlson's interest in caring for the aging population grew and in 1998 she moved into her new role as a Gerontological Nurse Practitioner (GNP). From 1998 – 2003 she was a GNP at the Senior Health Center run by the Sisters of Charity St. Joseph Hospital. She also started her own practice, Visiting Health Care, providing primary care and case management to older adults. Concurrently, she served as an adjunct faculty member at the UTHSCH, School of Nursing, teaching undergraduate community nursing and graduate preceptor experiences in geriatrics. Her career in education moved forward in 2006 when she added graduate education courses to her teaching load as adjunct faculty. Currently, Dr. Carlson retains adjunct faculty status at the UTHSCH, School of Nursing in Graduate Education and the University of Iowa, College of Nursing in Adult and Gerontology Nursing Area of Study.

Carlson is currently an assistant professor at Mennonite College of Nursing at Illinois State University. She teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses and was instrumental in developing the Gerontological Nurse Practitioner (GNP) curriculum for the college.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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