

Baylor prof's research focuses on nursing education in India

February 29, 2016

DALLAS—What began as a mission trip became an internationally recognized honor for Shelby Garner, assistant professor at Baylor University's Louise Herrington School of Nursing.



Shelby Garner Garner recently learned she was a recipient of a Fulbright-Nehru Research Grant from the U.S. India Educational Foundation. The grant will allow her to research the impact of simulation education for nurses in Bengaluru, India.

According to the World Health Organization, more than 2.4 million nurses are needed to fill the workforce gap in India. The demand for those nurses often is met by employing ill-qualified nurses, leading to poor care. Countries with the highest health care shortages have been proven to have the poorest health outcomes and the highest number of maternal and infant deaths.

Work in Bengaluru

“In February, I was overjoyed to receive a letter notifying me that I was awarded a Fulbright-Nehru Research Grant. The Fulbright grant will provide travel, a salary stipend and other resources needed to conduct this

research,” Garner said.

“As a Fulbright research scholar, I plan to work collaboratively with my faculty colleagues in Bengaluru to evaluate the impact of simulation use in bachelor of science in nursing and general nurse midwife programs in India.”

The Fulbright-Nehru program aims to enable U.S. faculty, researchers and professionals to teach and/or conduct research in partnership with an Indian host institution.

Garner plans to go to Bengaluru for two to three months in the summer of 2017 and again for two to three months in the spring of 2018, working in the interim through Skype and short-term trips, beginning in April, to coordinate her research efforts and pilot some of the tools she intends to employ in her research.



Nurses in India participate in a workshop as faculty from Baylor University’s Louise Herrington School of Nursing teach a module on “Helping Babies Breathe.” Garner plans to study how training that involves simulated medical situations affects nursing care.

Shelley Conroy, dean of the Louise Herrington School of Nursing, expressed pride in Garner's recognition, saying she has embraced the school's mission "to serve both God and the world through educational excellence, built upon the Christian faith."

Garner was drawn to Baylor in 2011 because the university allowed her to take part in Christian global endeavors. After her first year teaching at Baylor, she traveled with a group from the nursing school to Bengaluru for the first time. Their goal was to coordinate and present a workshop for the nursing faculty at the Rebekah Ann Naylor School of Nursing in India.

Discovering the challenges

On that trip, Garner heard the Indian nursing school's principal, Leena Raj, describe the challenges nurses and nursing educators face in her country.

"Due to complex religious and cultural factors, nursing is not perceived as a respectable profession in India," Garner said. "As we wrapped up the workshop and I returned to the United States, I felt called to establish ongoing partnerships with my colleagues in India to address some of these challenges."

The Rebekah Ann Naylor School of Nursing, owned by Bangalore Baptist Hospital, is a faith-based nursing school founded by Baylor alumna Rebekah Ann Naylor, who served as a missionary surgeon in India 35 years.

Following her trip to India, Garner led two research studies with colleagues in Dallas and India, exploring the challenges and brainstorming strategies to improve the nursing shortage in India.

Desire for continuing education

"Through this research, we discovered nurses in India have a desire for increased opportunities for continuing education and empowerment to use

health care technology,” Garner said. “Nurses in India aspire to be respected and deserve opportunities to emerge as leaders in the health care industry.”

Garner noted nurses also expressed a desire for a safe living space close to their work environments because of the dangers of traveling home after dark.

In 2015, Garner worked with Raj and Naveen Thomas, CEO of Bangalore Baptist Hospital, to write a grant to support the hospital’s nursing community. Last December, they received more than \$650,000 from the U.S. Agency for International Development American Schools and Hospitals Abroad Division. The grant will allow Baylor to partner with Bangalore Baptist Hospital to build a four-story Simulation Education and Research Centre for Nursing Excellence in Bengaluru.

The center will provide simulation-based learning experiences, allowing nurses and nursing students to practice and perfect clinical skills for patient care. The center has room for up to 48 nurses to live on the premises.

In January, a team of Baylor nursing school faculty and students participated in a groundbreaking ceremony for the facility in India. Their next step is hands-on research. Garner’s quarterly travel to India leading up to her lengthened stay will allow her to monitor progress on construction of the facility.

Flagship international exchange program

The Fulbright program is internationally acclaimed, with an aim to “increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.” It is considered the flagship international exchange program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.

Since its inception in 1946, more than 360,000 Fulbright grants have been awarded. More than 50 recipients have received Nobel Prizes.

“I am extremely grateful to all of the administration, faculty, staff, students and alumni at Baylor and the Louise Herrington School of Nursing for supporting these initiatives to India,” Garner said. “I feel blessed to serve at Baylor University, a university that is committed to and supports the integration of Christian faith with intellectual life.”