

INDEN Task Force on International Research Collaboration
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A Task Force was appointed by the INDEN Board in June 2004 with the specific charge to examine how INDEN might facilitate research collaboration among members in the global nursing community. The intent is to develop recommendations for strategies that would facilitate collaboration between and among accomplished investigators, inexperienced investigators and doctoral students representing both developed and developing countries.

Several INDEN members volunteered for the task force. The members were:

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Discussions were conducted via email and this report was constructed out of those discussions. Several documents were used as reference materials by the Task Force including the results of the strategic planning sessions and the research collaboration workgroups held during the INDEN meeting in November 2003 (Toronto). In addition, references from the literature and the World Wide Web on best practices in partnerships and global collaborative leadership were reviewed.

Key components of any INDEN strategy to facilitate global research collaboration should focus on increasing the capacity of the nurse researchers and doctoral students in two central areas: development of research skills to enable the conduct of research, preferably interdisciplinary, of the highest quality; and development of political savvy and competence in nursing researchers to position them in policy development and funding bodies which will develop research agendas and fund investigations on questions for global health and clinically relevant research. The goals are to increase the number of qualified nurse researchers who are ready to address pressing global research questions and knowledge development needs and to increase the involvement of nurse researchers in policy making and funding decisions that will support investigations. INDEN can facilitate the development of a critical mass of talent to carry out both goals.

Toward these ends, it was agreed that specific action steps toward capacity building are necessary rather than identifying a long list of possible strategies. Specific strategies will be essential for capacity building in this domain. A number of strategies directed primarily toward the short term future have been identified. In addition, one strategy for the long term is also presented. All are seen as essential next steps to provide a foundation and infrastructure for collaborative research efforts.

Specific initial strategies recommended to build collaborative research capacity are:

1. Conduct of Workshops.

At each INDEN meeting, beginning with May 2005, it is recommended that at least one session be held that is designed to facilitate collaborative research efforts. Several possibilities exist. Workshops and discussion groups could focus on building research competence. These could address specific skills, such as forming and working with interdisciplinary research teams in the international arena or particular methodologies and resources for addressing clinically relevant research questions of global significance.

In addition, it is recommended that each INDEN meeting include either a workshop or presentations that address various aspects of participation by members in international policy and/or funding agencies that will support the types of research questions relevant to the international nursing community. These presentations would address specific skills and strategies to enable capacity building among the membership for participation in these key international venues.

Once these workshops have been implemented over a period of four to six years, programs that feature exemplars of collaborative teams could be designed. These programs could be in two parts. The first part would consist of a presentation by a collaborative research team that has successfully engaged in a research project with an identified outcome. Ideally this would be a presentation by a team representing both developed and developing countries and experienced and inexperienced investigators although this would not necessarily have to be the case initially. It also could be the dissertation research of a doctoral student who worked with a committee comprised of international faculty. The exemplar team presentation would present both the process and outcomes of their research collaboration along with “lessons learned.” The second part of the program would be round table discussions among the INDEN membership on how that process might be replicated with new research collaborations. Ideally these round table discussions would be around common interest areas, perhaps the identified research priorities developed by the INDEN Task Force on Identification of Global Research Priorities (another task force commissioned and working parallel to this Task Force).

2. Development of Research Interest Groups.

The formation of research interest groups (RIG) would facilitate the development of working groups in focused areas of research interests among the INDEN membership. One approach might be to form RIGs around the prioritized areas for research as identified by the INDEN Task Force on Identification of Global Research Priorities. Other areas for research and scholarship might also be used. These RIGs could be inaugurated at an INDEN meeting, ideally starting in May 2005. Co-chairs, one each from developed and developing countries, could be appointed to facilitate these research interest groups. The purpose of the groups would be to provide a forum for discussing

research and knowledge development needs within the global research priorities and to provide for identification of a research agenda within each area. These groups could meet face to face at an INDEN meeting and then carry on virtual discussions throughout the year via email listservs and/or web-based mechanisms. The groups could discuss research interests and research questions, particular methods and measures related to those questions, and potential next steps for collaborative projects. The charge would be to have at least one collaborative project identified by a subgroup of members in each RIG within the next two years. All INDEN members could associate with one or more RIGs of interest to them.

3. Directory of Research Consultants.

A directory of experienced investigators and scholars who are willing to serve as consultants to research teams would provide a source for technical assistance as research questions are explored and refined. Ideally, this would be an interdisciplinary roster. This directory could be started at the upcoming INDEN meeting and be made available on the INDEN website. Interested INDEN members could identify the areas of technical assistance, based on their expertise and research programs, in which they would be willing to provide consultation and technical assistance. This resource could serve as a catalyst to moving forward quickly in the formation of collaborative teams.

4. Formation of a Research Council.

INDEN would benefit from the formation of a standing council with membership that represents both experienced investigators and doctoral students from various countries. This council could be charged with continuing the dialogue and strategy development initiated by the INDEN membership with the specific purpose of continuing to refine capacity building in the domain of collaborative research. There are a number of activities, identified by the membership of INDEN in November 2003, that require the committed efforts of a small group of individuals. Types of activities would include the identification of funding resources, development of the specific programs, and development of databases to facilitate research activities.

A longer term strategy has to do with funding for collaborative research activities:

5. Development of Funding Opportunities.

Initial activities should focus on increasing the funding support for nurse researchers and doctoral students to participate in capacity building activities. The support could be offered through competitive scholarships and fellowships which would permit recipients to participate in key international workshops or seminars designed to strengthen the research competence of members and/or the development of collaborative research teams. INDEN has been involved in some of these activities by supporting the attendance of doctoral students at INDEN meetings and research symposia. These should be expanded as funding permits.

It is recognized that funding opportunities generally serve as incentives for the conduct of research projects. It is also recognized that funding sources for international efforts are not readily available. In keeping with this, the Board of Directors of INDEN should move toward establishing a funding program for seed grants and pilot studies to support collaborative research projects among the membership. This will require specific fundraising activities such as solicitation of contributions to support research from individual members, member institutions, professional societies, and foundations. Such activities are very challenging and require further deliberation by the Board in terms of strategic initiatives that might be most productive. The Research Council, if appointed, could also be involved in identifying a compendium of potential funding sources globally. A goal might be to provide a competitive funding cycle for at least one collaborative project by 2009. This would permit sufficient time for deliberations to occur and specific funding initiatives to be developed.

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