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Thank you Jenny for the opportunity to provide an editorial comment for this celebratory edition of the *WCET® Journal's* 40th year of publication – what an achievement of vision, persistence and straight out hard work this represents by a huge number of people over this significant time span.

I became a WCET® member in 1979 after completing my Stomal Therapy Nursing Education Program (STNEP) as these programs were called in Australia at that time. Despite living and working in a fairly isolated part of the world, I had been privileged to work with a variety of nurses from other countries, to begin a lifetime of travel to other parts of the world, and to appreciate the nursing education and service provided in Western Australia, not only to ostomy patients but also more generally.

The differences were stark in many of these countries and the benefit of an organisation with the express purpose of improving the care of ostomy patients worldwide had huge potential, although the task seemed immense. It still is, although huge strides forward have been made; the *Journal* has helped us all learn about these, as well as contributing directly as an educational resource.

Reviewing those early journals, it is evident the editors wanted to provide readers with a regular update of case studies, research papers and information on which nurses (who could read English) could depend. Not all articles would have been pertinent for all readers – there were many different contexts, levels of technical sophistication, availability of equipment and products, as well as cultural norms that were at odds with others, and a variety of healthcare practices which impacted on nurses' ability to incorporate new knowledge, even when presented with compelling evidence.

Over time the influence of the organisation spread – I was involved with organising the 1986 WCET® 6th Biennial Congress in Perth, my first international exposure to more than the *Journal* and I remember being very impressed with so many passionate stomal therapy nurses / enterostomal therapy nurses / stoma nurses and other similar titles gathered together, proudly carrying their national flags and dressed in national costume. The published proceedings booklet¹ contains articles on continence, urology, gastrointestinal tract diseases and management, gynaecological and sexual issues

and a pot-pourri of other topics. Research and education matters were covered in workshop formats to enable smaller groups to be interactive, and presentations under the heading of 'Who Cares' provided a wide variety of topics covering the composite role of the specialist stoma nurse. These presentations were given by nurses and our medical colleagues from 10 different countries.

In addition, there was a large display of posters covering an even wider number of topics; these were created by an even greater number of practitioners wanting to share their experiences – what a super opportunity to learn. Interestingly, Norma N Gill reported the results of a worldwide survey she had conducted seeking feedback on the status of ostomy rehabilitation. The early efforts to establish support mechanisms, product supply and education of specialist nurses to improve the lot of ostomates in many countries makes for harrowing reading when reviewed in 2020. WCET® has achieved so much because of the drive and tenacity of those early pioneers, supported by a shared passion to make a positive difference in people's lives.

Today, the *WCET® Journal* is mailed to members in 65 countries, is translated into four languages other than English and still remains true to its original purpose of advancing the specialised nursing care of people who have stoma, wound or continence needs. The education of nurses in those diverse countries continues to benefit from the support offered by this global entity; despite political and social differences, human needs, when confronted by a stoma, wound or incontinence, should be met initially by these specialist nurses. The advent of COVID-19 has curtailed travel, but the time has been used to explore alternative avenues for education and support, so the modern leaders show the same drive and tenacity to progress the cause as those earlier ones. I applaud you all and thank you sincerely.

Thank you.

REFERENCE

1. WCET. Proceedings of the 6th Biennial Congress of the World Council of Enterostomal Therapists. Perth: Abbot International; 1986.