

New Nursing Dean Dr. Inez Tuck to Use Myriad Experiences

Throughout her career, Dr. Inez Tuck has pushed the boundaries of what it means to be a nurse. As the new dean of the School of Nursing, she plans to continue its focus on integrating social, emotional, and spiritual healing as part of students' learning experiences.

"Just caring for a patient's physical issues were never enough for me," says Tuck, who joined the MGH Institute in March. "I've always taken a more holistic approach, which I find leads to better outcomes."

She first immersed herself in whole-patient care while earning her master's degree in psychiatric and mental health nursing at the University of Florida-Gainesville. Her graduate work with patients with mental illness exposed her to the emotional and spiritual suffering associated with a stigmatized illness. As part of a qualitative research study, she later observed how families endure as mental illness transforms a son or daughter into a stranger. A decade later, she witnessed a similar type of anguish while helping families cope with the loss of a child to homicide. "The depth of sorrow was stunning," says Tuck. "These are not patients in a traditional sense, so there's often not a place for them in the health care system."

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Looking at things from different perspectives has always had a prominent place in much of Tuck's work and scholarship. She secured two large grants in the early 2000s from the National Institutes of Health's Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine to study how mind-body interventions could help people with breast cancer and HIV manage the



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emotional and psychological aspects of their illness. "A spiritual perspective," she found, "helped many people move beyond their circumstances to a higher level of being."

In 2008, she earned a Master of Divinity from Virginia Union University, which provided her an academic framework to support her long-time interest in the spiritual aspect of healing. She also earned a PhD in child development and family relations from University of North Carolina-Greensboro.

Giving Students the Right Tools

Her role at the Institute, as she sees it, is to instill students with knowledge and skills they can use to advance their careers and nursing in general. This includes planning for an ever-evolving health care landscape, one increasingly determined by financial issues, population and community-based care, interprofessional team-based practice, and global issues such as Ebola and the Zika virus.

"We need to be thinking about what skills our graduates must have in this changing environment," she notes. "It's the leaders who are making the policies or heading the organizations who will impact the direction of the profession and the quality of health care in a profound way, and that's what we will continue to do to develop leaders in the School of Nursing."

Right after taking part in her first Commencement in May, Tuck left for her second trip to Moldova, where she is continuing to help develop a baccalaureate nursing program in the former Soviet Republic. She envisions several partnership opportunities that may expand the Institute's offerings in global health, from student exchange and teaching opportunities, to helping develop health policies and nursing curricula.

"This is a phenomenal opportunity to provide our students and faculty with the experiences that will make them better nurses in an increasingly global world."