

Global mission

Meg Styles reports on the work of the Gretta Foundation, which aims to set up nurse scholarships in disease-stricken countries



'Imagine a world without persons who know what nurses know; who believe as nurses believe; who do what nurses do; who have the effect that nurses have upon the health of individuals, families and nations; who enjoy the trust that nurses enjoy... imagine a world without nurses.'

This challenge was set by the internationally renowned nursing scholar Margretta Madden Styles, or Gretta as she was affectionately known, who died in 2005.

I am Gretta's daughter and I admired my mother, who loved nursing and all who practise it. I grew to have an inherent respect for nurses. But my real passion for nursing has a more personal origin. Over a number of years, I witnessed the tireless care nurses gave my

Gretta Styles: a champion of nurses throughout the world

father, the late Douglas Styles. And, soon after, I saw the wonderful care provided by hospice nurses that helped my mother achieve a painless and dignified death.

In some of her last words, my mother challenged me to choose a life's work that was meaningful. So I abandoned my long-time corporate career and joined the non-profit organisation Global AIDS Interfaith Alliance, where I acquired first-hand knowledge of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and of a model for nursing scholarships.

Now, I am proud to honour my mother's memory through the Gretta Foundation.

Chronic shortage

My mother's challenge to imagine a world without nurses seems sadly predictive. All people deserve the same quality of care that my parents received, but too many are denied it. Developing countries have a chronic shortage of nurses, which undermines global efforts to improve maternal health, cut child mortality rates and fight the advance of devastating diseases.

The crisis is exacerbated by the nursing 'brain drain', that sees skilled nurses migrating from disease-burdened countries to

wealthier, more industrialised ones. The Gretta Foundation aims to provide in-country nursing scholarships to disadvantaged people in developing nations, thereby boosting depleted care workforces. This year, which is our first, we are focusing on Malawi, where we will begin funding 75 scholarships in September.

Beyond 2008, our work will expand to other nations with crippling healthcare shortages.

Nurse scholarship recipients will enter nursing programmes in their country's system of education. Each scholarship will provide full support through the nursing programme. Graduating scholars will serve in their country's clinics and hospitals for a period commensurate with each year of academic assistance.

I cannot imagine a more worthy mission than contributing to the aspirations of future nurses. I like to think that my mother would be proud **NS**

Meg Styles is founder of the Gretta Foundation

To learn more about the Gretta Foundation, contact Meg Styles at meg@grettafoundation.org or visit www.grettafoundation.org

SUMMARY

Gretta Styles was internationally renowned as a nursing scholar. Since her death, her daughter has set up a foundation to help people in disease-burdened countries become nurses.

Keywords

Gretta Foundation • Gretta Styles • Nursing scholarships • Malawi • Disadvantaged people Maternal and child mortality • HIV/AIDS