

Rita K. Chow Papers2022-076

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Author: Henry K. Sharp

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University of Virginia School of Nursing
P.O. Box 800782
Charlottesville, Virginia 22908-0782
mailto:nurs-hxc@virginia.edu
URL: <http://www.nursing.virginia.edu/cnhi/>

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Abstract

(b. 1926) 27-year career with U.S. Public Health Service, with specialties in nursing administration and gerontological nursing. Four major assignments represented: 1) Deputy Director to Faye G. Abdellah, Chief Professional Nurse, Office of Long-Term Care; 2) quality assurance coordination at Sioux Reservation Hospital, Rosebud, South Dakota; 3) Assistant Director of Nursing and Director of Patient Education at the National Hansen's Disease Center, Carville, Louisiana; 4) Director of Nursing at the Bureau of Prisons Medical Programs, Fort Worth, Texas. Also post-operative cardiac care research project materials [IRB certification required].

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The Eleanor Crowder Bjoring Center for Nursing Historical Inquiry

Administrative Information

Biographical / Historical

Rita Kathleen Chow is a first-generation American of Chinese descent, born in San Francisco, California in 1926. Her father, upon immigrating to the United States from Canton Province, China, apprenticed as a tailor and subsequently opened his own shop in the Mission district of San Francisco. Here Chow's parents raised three children, impressing upon them the values of education, Christian faith, and hard work. In many respects, theirs is a typical immigrant family story. The children worked in the shop, with differing responsibilities according to their ages, then proceeded to become English-language students in the city's public school system as well as Cantonese- and Mandarin- language students, after hours, at the Cumberland Presbyterian Chinese School. Although the elder Chows had not been able to pursue formal education beyond the high school level, they encouraged their children to advance to college programs.

Chow earned an Associate of Arts degree in 1946 from the San Francisco Junior College, continuing to the Stanford University School of Nursing, where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in 1950. The Stanford University Hospital employed her as a nurse and teaching assistant after graduation, and she continued work as an instructor and Director of Student Health Services at Fresno State School of Nursing from 1952-54. Chow joined the United States Army Nurse Corps in 1954, and with the assistance of the Army Nurse program, completed a Master of Science in Nursing the next year at the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing at the Western Reserve University, as Case Western was then called. Active duty responsibilities followed to 1957, both as an instructor and general duty nurse; she continued in the Army Reserves to 1968. After an academic year as Instructor of Nursing at the Wayne State University College of Nursing, Chow enrolled in the Teachers College of Columbia University in 1958, where she earned a professional diploma in Administration in 1961 and a Doctorate in Education (Ed.D.) in 1968. Concurrently, Chow served on the editorial staff of the American Journal of Nursing from 1961 to 1965, leaving the position that year to direct her cardiovascular nursing research project at Ohio State University Hospital, completed the year she earned her doctorate. This important project served as the foundation for her well-regarded nursing textbook, *Cardiosurgical Nursing Care: Understandings, Concepts, and Principles for Practice*, published in 1976.

The varied responsibilities pertaining to a career in the United States Public Health Service (U.S.P.H.S.) led Dr. Chow to many different assignments over the next twenty-seven years. Beginning with appointments at offices in the Washington, D.C. area, Chow undertook administration, research, data analysis, and planning and evaluation projects for, among others, the National Center for Health Services Research and Development, and the Office/Division of Long Term Care. During this time, Dr. Chow pursued another graduate degree, a Bachelor of Independent Studies in Public Health, awarded by George Mason University in 1983. Subsequent U.S.P.H.S. assignments also took her further afield. Chow returned to the floors as a supervisory clinical nurse and quality assurance coordinator for the Sioux Reservation Indian Health Service Hospital at Rosebud, South Dakota, in 1982; and from 1984 to 1989, she again combined clinical nursing duties with administration and program development as the Assistant Director of Nursing and Director of Patient Education at the National Hansen's Disease Center in Carville, Louisiana. Chow's final assignment with the Public Health Service was as Director of Nursing for the Federal Bureau of Prisons Medical Center in Fort Worth, Texas.

Since her retirement in 1995, Dr. Chow has undertaken consulting projects, traveled extensively for academic conferences, and served as Director of the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging, of the National Council on Aging. Dr. Chow's commitment to life-long learning has found additional expression here in her certification as a Holistic Nurse. Among her many extra-curricular activities, Dr. Chow has maintained an active interest in the Girl Scout Program, which she served as a leader for many years in her youth, and

membership in the Pilot Club of Arlington, Virginia, a women's international service organization. She received the Holistic Nurse of the Year award in 2001, and the U.S. Public Health Service Chief Nurse Officer Award in 2003, among many other testimonials of service and devotion throughout her career.

Scope and Contents

The Rita K. Chow Papers document the career, personal, and professional interests of Rita Kathleen Chow (b. 1926), Ed.D., R.N., A.H.N.-C.(P.), F.A.A.N. The scope of the holdings ranges from Chow's educational and early-professional accomplishments, through her formal career with the United States Public Health Service, to her continued educational and leadership activities in retirement.

Of particular importance among the early materials are Chow's nursing course notes, student papers, and hospital procedure manual excerpts, which offer a detailed illustration of the elements of nursing education and practice at mid-century. Also valuable are the records of Chow's major research project on post-operative cardiac nursing care. Developed at Ohio State University from 1965 to 1968, this innovative research led not only to Chow's 1968 doctoral dissertation in Education from Teachers' College, Columbia University (The Identification and Assessment of Nursing Action in the Care of Postoperative Cardiac Patients), but also to her 1976 textbook *Cardiosurgical Nursing Care: Understandings, Concepts, and Principles for Practice* (New York: Springer). These projects placed Chow in the vanguard of professional trends at the time, as her interests aligned with research and policy initiatives concerning the effects of clinical nursing on patients, advocated by one of her mentors, Ellwynne M. Vreeland, a noted nursing analyst and director in the U.S. Public Health Service Division of Nursing.

Chow's twenty-seven-year career with the U.S. Public Health Service (U.S.P.H.S.) involved numerous assignments, the most significant of which are well represented in the correspondence, subject, and publications series of the collection. These include: 1) work with Faye G. Abdellah, Chief Professional Nurse, U.S.P.H.S., at the Office of Long-Term Care, where Chow came to serve as Deputy Director; 2) Quality Assurance Coordination at the Rosebud, South Dakota, Sioux Reservation Hospital; 3) an Assistant Directorship of Nursing and Director of Patient Education at the National Hansen's Disease Center, Carville, Louisiana; and 4) a Directorship of Nursing with the Bureau of Prisons Medical Programs, Fort Worth, Texas. Dr. Chow's work in long-term care centered on a program to improve conditions in the nation's nursing homes, and included development of the Patient Appraisal and Care Evaluation tool (P.A.C.E.), intended to incorporate patient opinions into the development of national minimum-care standards for these facilities. Dr. Chow also undertook a study analyzing the teaching of self-care to post-myocardial infarction patients, "The Road to Recovery." The Rosebud Sioux Reservation materials document Dr. Chow's efforts to professionalize the quality of nursing care at the Reservation hospital, and to lead that institution to certification. At the Carville Center, Dr. Chow developed self-care and nursing education programs, including "Body Recall," a physical rehabilitation program. And for the Bureau of Prisons, Dr. Chow assisted in the establishment of a new long-term care facility for the Federal inmate population, including an inmate-run hospice program.

Dr. Chow assembled travel diaries for five trips taken to Asia, both before and after her retirement, several of these as a consultant in her areas of certification: Nursing Administration and Gerontological Nursing. The Chow Papers' publications/presentations series and correspondence files also record further global travels and speaking engagements. Detailed documentation of Dr. Chow's program of certification in Holistic Nursing, obtained in 1998, offer a glimpse of her personal philosophy of nursing care as well as a record of the procedures necessary to obtain this new professional certification. Additional materials concern her role as Director of the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging. A large collection of photographs round out the holdings, as do the three boxes of restricted research materials, derived from the post-operative cardiac care project (patient records and nurse interview transcripts), patient information interview sheets from the post-myocardial infarction self-care study, and a limited number of Hansen's Disease patient records.

Arrangement

The Rita K. Chow Papers are organized into eight series or groups of materials. The first of these divisions is a subject series (4 boxes); the second is a chronological arrangement of correspondence (4 boxes); the third, an educational and professional materials series (7 boxes); the fourth, a collection of travel diaries (1 box); the fifth, photographs (2 boxes); the sixth, research materials containing patient information -- restricted access (3 boxes); the seventh, artifacts (1 box); and the eighth, additions which could not be incorporated in the original organization (1 box). The subject series comprises materials related to: 1) the American Bureau for Medical Advancement in China (ABMAC); 2) Cardiology; 3) the Federal Correctional System; 4) Gerontology; 5) Girl Scouts; 6) Hansen's Disease; 7) Holistic Nursing; 8) Long Term Care; 9) Miscellaneous items; and 10) the Rosebud, South Dakota, Sioux Reservation. Within the educational/professional series are a collection of Dr. Chow's certificates and diplomas, her nursing course notes and student papers, and her dissertation. In addition, this series includes copies of her numerous conference presentations, lectures, and

published papers, indexed by title. The entire collection begins with five folders of biographical materials concerning Dr. Chow. (Semmes-Weinstein Monofilament Touch Sensitivity Tester, circa 1980s, Prototype screening tool for Hansen's Disease, Artifact Box 16, 16.2012.0008)