

[Home Page](#) » [Lifestyle](#) » [Health](#) » Nursing theorist urges open hearts

# Nursing theorist urges open hearts

Colo. dean emerita says caring is important

By [Dale Rodebaugh](#) Herald staff writer

Article Last Updated: Sunday, August 19, 2012 8:11pm

Keywords: [Health](#),



-A A+

Share

Nurses, caught up in the daily grind of their profession, must open their hearts to bring more humanity to health care.

The message went out from a nationally known nursing theorist to more than 100 colleagues from District 7 of the Colorado Nurses Association at a meeting Aug. 10 at DoubleTree Hotel.

“We get boxed in and aren’t aware of the importance of caring,” Jean Watson said. “As nurses, we must work with the whole person.”

There are 17.6 million nurses in the world, she said.

It’s too easy to see those in one’s charge as objects rather than individuals and, in turn, become robotic rather than responsive, Watson said.

Her talk was called “Restoring the Heart of Nursing and Health Care from Within.”

Watson is dean emerita of the University of Colorado School of Nursing and founder of the Center for Human Caring in Colorado.

She has a graduate degree in nursing and a Ph.D in educational psychology and counseling.

As founder of the Watson Caring Science Institute, she defined a human-caring theory based on 10 caritas – Latin for “charity.”

“Curing is not the same as healing,” Watson said. “A person may be cured but not healed.”

The statement underlies her belief that nurse and patient must connect – enter each other’s space – to bring about healing.

Watson's philosophy and theory of human caring guides nurses in many parts of the world and is changing the culture in hospitals, including the Kaiser Permanente health system in California.

In Watson's model for health care, nurses build a relationship with patients beyond banalities such as, "It's time for your medicine."

The relationship requires compassion, respect for the beliefs of others, openness and listening skills, Watson said.

The approach can bring purpose and meaning to a nurse's own life, she said.

Caring is not a medical process and is not ordered by prescription, she said.

"Nurses have a covenant with the world," Watson said. "Nursing is a spiritual practice, but it got caught up in medicine.

"When you touch others and others touch you, it brings love, which heals."

The heart sends more messages to the brain than vice versa, she said.

Karen Zink, a nurse practitioner at Southwest Women's Health Associates, said in an interview outside the meeting that her contact with Watson as a graduate student produced a revelation.

"I was a diploma nurse, a floor nurse," Zink said. "She opened our hearts and minds about the world, about ourselves, our relationship with others and institutions."

Zink said she can apply the approach in her own practice but the process tends to be mechanical in an institutional setting.

"We need a revival of nursing in this community," Zink said.

Lynne Murison, a registered nurse at a private practice in Farmington and outgoing president of Colorado Nurses Association District 7, said she tries to apply the principles that Watson espouses.

"I try to incorporate the principles not because they're nice but because they produce positive benefits," Murison said.

She was impressed with the documented studies described by Watson showing that in settings where the 10 caritas are practiced, patients do better emotionally as well as physically.



⊕ Watson



⊕ Courtesy of [www.watsoncaringscience.org](http://www.watsoncaringscience.org)

Jean Watson, dean emerita of the University of Colorado School of Nursing, implores those in her profession to not stop caring. It's vital to healing, she said.