

## Connecting with *the Center for Correctional Health Networks*



*Pictured above, Dr. Deborah Shelton (second right) meets with CCHNet colleagues to discuss the center's strategy.*

The Center for Correctional Health Networks, founded and directed by Deborah Shelton, PhD, RN, NE-BC, CCHP, FAAN, provides a new learning opportunity for UConn School of Nursing students. According to its mission statement, this center has been designed to “seek health care innovations and test quality improvement strategies in real-world practice settings to determine effectiveness, efficiency and equity of health practices and policies.”

Deborah Shelton conceived this center as a result of personal experiences in clinical environments among incarcerated patients: observations from across the globe, thoughts from professional peers, and evidence from research. Shelton formed theories from these personal experiences and then created her “dream job,” working with people from varying disciplines on research, education, and clinical projects that would affect correctional health. “I enjoy hearing peoples’ perspectives. I believe it is important to keep learning, to change and evolve in your thinking and approach,” Shelton explains.

After conceptually planning, brainstorming, and envisioning the center, she introduced the idea to her professional peers;

correctional nurses and health care leaders from across the country and across the globe all were interested in Shelton’s idea.

Currently, the center is expanding and partnering with academicians, health care providers and students interested in working with people who have had an incarceration experience – patients (both adult and juvenile) found in prisons, jails, or community corrections settings. The center’s partners are involved in a range of activities, from research and practice to education, and come together to work on specific projects or programs of research. Shelton is currently working with Dr. Denise Panosky (UConn Nursing clinical associate professor) and Dr. Constance Weiskopf (Director for Nursing and Patient Care Services, University of Connecticut Health Center’s Correctional Managed Health Care) to lead a team of students evaluating the Correctional Nurse Competency Program<sup>©</sup>. Seven students will help collect and enter data once they have received training and have been approved by the Connecticut Department of Correction (CDOC). Dr. Megan Ehret, an associate professor in the UConn School of Pharmacy, is also working with a School of Business honors student, Andrew Glick, to look at medication adherence for incarcerated people with mental disorders to understand the influence of co-payments in prison systems, how they affect access to care, and how that influences medication utilization. The center is open to new ideas, developing conference presentations and research articles, and applying for grants, which are reviewed and discussed at monthly meetings.

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When looking towards the future, Deborah Shelton anticipates the center to continue to grow and prosper. Within the next 3-5 years, she expects funding for research to be stabilized, which will ensure that the research, education and practice programs are clearly defined and sustainably functioning. She also hopes to develop award mechanisms that honor the work done within the correctional nursing field. Funding for post-doctoral students, as well as establishing an international education program are also a few things the center looks forward to in the future. In terms of the major UConn Next Generation initiative, Shelton hopes that UConn School of

Nursing students can learn from the center to become more innovative. "Having an opportunity to participate in the center's activities, through observation, mentoring, the conduct of research, or by taking a formal class," Shelton says, "center partners have the opportunity to network with peers who have similar interests and who can support career development. We seek to create an environment that nurtures excellence in individuals who collectively will make an impact upon the health and health systems that serve our target population."



Learn more about the Center for Correctional Health Networks at  
**[nursing.uconn.edu/chprn](http://nursing.uconn.edu/chprn)**.

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