



Institute of Health and Society

Research Seminar

Professor Derek Sellman,

University of Alberta

In pursuit of practical wisdom for nursing

For Aristotle, practical wisdom (phronesis) comes in the form of knowing when to do the right thing in the right way for the right reason at the right time and to the right extent. If this sounds familiar that may be the result of its appropriation in, for example, the five (or, more recently, eight) rights of drug administration. Nothing wrong with this, of course, for the promotion of the rote learning implied by medication administration rights (however many of them there are) is behavioural habituation writ large. Modern versions of Aristotle's call for habituation might include Benner's identification of the checklist requirements of the novice and, less formally, the adage make it 'til you fake it.

In this brief presentation I shall sketch out the relevance of Aristotle's practical wisdom for 21st century nursing by positing that the focus on technical competence (often the demand of students and employers) compromises the ideal of safe and effective practice that government, regulatory bodies, and employers seek. In other words, while we may be providing nursing students the wherewithal to do things right, it may be at the expense of neglecting their capacity to know when, to whom or to what extent, and/or why it is the right thing to do; and if they do not know these things then situations in which the right thing to do is no longer a matter of habit (Mid-Staffs, perhaps?) have the effect of leaving their moral compass bereft of magnetic north.

Date: Wednesday 8th June 2016

Time: 13.00 hrs—14.00 hrs

Location: EEG164

All welcome, if possible please confirm attendance in advance by

To: m.carter@worc.ac.uk