Dr. Rahel Naef

Excellence in Family Nursing Award

Rahel Naef is currently an Assistant Professor for Implementation Science in Nursing; Deputy Head of the Institute for Implementation Science in Health Care, Faculty of Medicine at the University of Zurich, and Research Group Head at the Center of Clinical Nursing Science at the University Hospital Zurich, Switzerland. Prof Naef’s appointment to this newly created position of Assistant Professor confirms her expertise and pioneering leadership in nursing research and implementation science; a current priority in nursing research with necessary impact on nursing practice with families.

Prof Naef has initiated and sustained an extremely successful research program focusing on effective delivery of family support interventions and successful uptake of family engagement practices in acute-critical care in Switzerland. Prof Naef has secured over 2.5 million Euros in funding for family nursing research, of which the majority has been for research in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) family care. Her commitment to dissemination with every initiative extends her impact to global health care systems.

Her success as principal investigator in 2020 in obtaining the extremely prestigious and highly competitive funding for investigator-initiated clinical trials (IICT) from the Swiss National Science Fund for her innovative and ambitious project; *A multicenter, cluster randomized superiority trial of a guideline-based Family support intervention in Intensive Care UnitS* (FICUS trial 2021-2025) must be applauded. Prof Naef is the first nurse ever to receive the IICT grant and is one of only a handful of nurses from Switzerland to receive funding from this organization. Importantly, she is the first family nursing researcher to receive this award. Prior to the success in this grant application, Prof Naef led her team in piloting the feasibility of a family support intervention (advanced practice nurse-led family support pathway) in an ICU. This foundational work concluded that families and staff experienced this intervention as acceptable, appreciated this specialised role and support, and found this model of care delivery beneficial. The FICUS trial builds on Prof Naef’s pilot work to test a multicomponent, nurse-led family support intervention. This trial engages equal representation of ICU nurses and physicians in interdisciplinary research in sixteen ICUs in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, and the intervention is led by bedside nurses who have been specially trained as family nurses. In addition to testing the intervention’s effectiveness, the implementation of the family support intervention in the real-world context of the eight ICUs randomized to the intervention arm of the study is investigated through a mixed-methods case study with health professionals, highlighting implementation science. This trailblazing work has served to raise the awareness of family nursing within the ICU setting and has engaged the interprofessional ICU community in Switzerland in broader efforts to improve family care. This is evidenced by Prof Naef’s frequent invitations from various organizations to serve as a keynote speaker on the topic of family nursing care.

In her role as Research Group Head at the University Hospital Zurich, Prof Naef has led the implementation of family systems care in women’s health within the hospital. She is currently working to adapt the evidence base on family end-of-life and bereavement support (BEST for Family) to the local context and develop a tailored, participatory implementation strategy in two specialized palliative care services in an acute setting <https://www.ifis.uzh.ch/en/Lehre-Forschung/Forschung/BEST-for-Family.html>. Prof Naef has also served as the head of the Family Care Committee at the University Hospital Zurich for over five years, developing resources and building capacity to strengthen family nursing and interprofessional care within the hospital. This work has resulted in a number of valuable hospital resources. For example, a family meeting guide and three brief videos explaining how to work with families is now standard of care.

In her role within the Institute for Implementation Science in Health Care, Prof Naef is developing the field of Family Nursing Implementation Science in Switzerland and internationally. She is the first professor of Nursing at the University of Zurich, developing nursing science with a focus on family nursing in Switzerland, thus building capacity in both implementation science and family nursing. It is important to note that her work is interdisciplinary, and thus, she serves to highlight the important contributions made by family nursing to the broader healthcare team.

Prof Naef was instrumental in establishing the IFNA International Research Collaboration: Acute Care Cluster in 2017 and has been a co-leader of this global research group ever since. This group of thirty-two acute care family nursing researchers spanning five continents successfully completed its first research project and publications; *ICU nurse-family engagement from a global perspective: A qualitative multi-site exploration* (Naef, R., et al, 2021) and *Factors influencing critical care nurses' family engagement practices: An international perspective* (Price, A.M., et al, 2022) under her leadership. This global group currently has five active family nursing in acute care research projects on the go. Through this collaboration, Prof Naef is also involved in another international study looking at carers experience of having a close relative with dementia in long term care during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Prof Naef acts as an exceptional mentor and role model to the researchers she leads, as well as the research students she supervises at masters and PhD level; always striving to demonstrate the importance and value of integrating clinical practice and academic settings. She is also a reviewer for various international funders (i.e. Dutch Cancer Society, and Choosing Wisely Switzerland grant) and Scientific Committee member of the United Kingdom Implementation Research Conference. In sum, Prof Naef is a transformational family nursing leader improving the lives of families around the globe.

**Petra Brysiewicz**

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