

The Kathy Fletcher Memorial Gerontological Advanced Practice Nursing Association Collection

In February 2021 the GAPNA Collection was rededicated in honor of Kathleen Ryan Fletcher (1951-2019), RN, DNP, GNP-BC, FAAN. Dr. Fletcher was a respected leader and beloved colleague with a lifelong appreciation for learning and a resourceful dedication to innovations in gerontological nursing practice. After beginning her career in Philadelphia, where she worked in medical-surgical care, Dr. Fletcher found her passion for gerontological nursing among the GNPs and older patients in the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Prescott, Arizona. "I was intent on learning more after seeing the compassion, skill, and autonomy of the nurse practitioners at the VAMC," she wrote later in her career. She completed the Gerontological Nurse Practitioner program at the University of Lowell in 1982 and advanced in the Veterans Administration system in Pennsylvania, soon moving with her husband to Charlottesville in 1986, where she joined the faculty of the University of Virginia School of Nursing, and, ultimately, became a director of acute care for the elderly in the UVA Medical Center. She completed her career with the Riverside Health System in Tidewater Virginia, where she introduced the evidence-based elder-care improvement programs that she was instrumental in developing at UVA.

Also at the University of Virginia, Dr. Fletcher obtained her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree in 2010 with a dissertation on "Long Term Care Residents and Fall Risk During Hospitalization." In addition to academic research projects, she published extensively, including a significant revision of the gerontological nursing scope-of-practice standards for the ANA and co-authorship of *Advanced Practice Nursing in the Care of Older Adults*, first edition, which the AJN recognized as "the book of the year" for gerontological nursing in 2014. The Virginia Nurses Association presented Fletcher with the Nancy Vance Award for Clinical Excellence in 2001, and the next year the American Academy of Nursing inducted her as a fellow. The Governor of Virginia nominated her to two successive four-year terms on the State Board of Long-Term Care Administrators, in 2005 and again in 2009. In recognition of her lengthy devotion to service in the field, Fletcher received the Dave Butler Spirit of GAPNA Award in 2017.

Dr. Fletcher's involvement with GAPNA – then known as the National Conference of Gerontological Nurse Practitioners – began as a conference attendee in 1990. She quickly rose through the ranks, serving as a newsletter columnist, then editor; organization treasurer; and president for the 1995-96 term. Fletcher joined the GAPNA historical committee in 1997 and remained an active member for the rest of her life, including twelve years as co-chair. In 2013, the historical committee released a monograph highlighting the history of the geriatric nursing field and the thirty-year development of the organization. Fletcher spearheaded the gift of GAPNA historical documents and materials to the Eleanor Crowder Bjoring Center for Nursing Historical Inquiry at the University of Virginia in 2014. The Bjoring Center continues to receive donations as the official repository for GAPNA historical materials. "I remain passionate and proud to be a gerontological nurse," Fletcher stated when she accepted the GAPNA Spirit Award; this collection honors the achievements of all those like Kathy Fletcher who are proud to be gerontological nurses.