



Laudatio: Dunja Nicca, Defence, October 28th 2009

Dear Dr Nicca
Dear Dunja

It is an honour to address you as a PhD in Nursing Science granted by the University of Basel.

Today you celebrate the end of many years of intensive work and investment for your academic career. I congratulate you to this success and: I am so proud of you!

Let me share some elements that contributed to your academic but also your clinical achievements so far.

The most important element over the last years was your passion for clinical work and HIV patients and their families. Along side with your PhD studies, you have been working as Advanced Practice Nurse in the HIV clinics in Basel and St. Gallen. You offered patient and their close support persons excellent and comprehensive chronic illness management support and you always were passionate about understanding the perspectives of those you cared for. These perspectives are represented in your first PhD publication about a patient case. In this evidence-based paper, you showed how important self-management support of patient is and provide guidance to how it can be offered.

A next element was your passion for qualitative and mixed methods research. You conducted your research project with great intellectual discipline. Your results are impressive – and I feel sorry that today, we

only got a glimpse of your work. Your passion of grasping the every day perspectives of patients and their close support persons has been guiding your entire research program. Your research resulted in 4 studies and 4 peer reviewed data based papers that have been published or are submitted to international interdisciplinary journals. That all this work was done in an assistantship combined with your position as Advanced Practice Nurse in Basel and St. Gallen during the last years is more than noteworthy. In all these positions you provided leadership to the interdisciplinary teams most specifically to nurses! It shows that vision, passion, dedication and a deep commitment are important for an successful academic career.

A further element that contributed to your PhD was your supportive environment. I'm honoured to especially acknowledge Professor Pietro Vernazza Head of Infectiology of the Kantonsspital in St. Gallen and his entire team of nurses and physicians for the support they have given to you in the past years. You found an environment at the Kantonsspital St. Gallen that was extremely supportive in you pursuing your PhD studies. The infectiology at St. Gallen became your research setting and was open for a joint appointment with the Institute.

One element in your success was the support your PhD committee members and other mentors. I would like to thank and acknowledge the work of this committee for the open discussions and support in all these years. There is Prof Kim Moody, my dear friend and colleague from the university of Maine who provided support in the process of analysis and writing. Kim Moody invited you many times and provided an environment to think and write. There is Prof Manuel Battegay who supported with his knowledge about HIV and his tremendous experiences with PhD students. There is Prof Marcel Tanner who added the public health perspective to the studies. There is Prof Sally Rankin from UCSF as an independent evaluator and there is Prof Wolf Langewitz who stepped in at the very end to provide one of the evaluations. There is also Prof Mary-Beth Happ who provided insights into mixed methods research. Unfortunately, Profs Tanner and Langewitz are not here today but they send you, Dunja their warmest greetings. This diverse committee has created a platform that allowed you as a beginning nurse scientists to get a PhD at the University of Basel and I hope that further collaborations will develop.

Als letzter und eigentlich als wichtigstes Element, möchte ich Dunjas Partner Marcel Zürcher danken. Er, zusammen mit der ganzen Familie, Freunde und Kolleginnen und Kollegen waren für Dunja da - "über all diese Jahre - dies ist nicht selbstverständlich. Es ist nicht immer einfach gewesen. Dunja war oft abwesend – hat viele Abende, Wochenende und

auch Ferien für ihre Forschung gearbeitet. Die Belastung war – so weiss ich – manchmal sehr hoch.

Dieser Rückhalt durch Dunja's liebste Menschen war enorm und ich hoffe, dass die gemeinsame Freude am Sport, am Reisen und am Sein miteinander in Zukunft wieder mehr in den Vordergrund rücken darf.

What will be the future for you Dunja? We all look forward to your next steps in research and clinical work and to our collaboration in the upcoming years. Congratulations, again, Dunja and Dr. Nicca!

Rebecca Spirig
Prof, PhD, RN