
NFP PIONEERS: NFP Teacher Training and Service Development Efforts—1974-1985

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In late Fall '94, I was asked by Theresa Notare of the DDP/NFP, to write a summary of my professional activities in the United States related to NFP. In giving this some thought perhaps the easiest way to capture my involvement is to point to the diocesan NFP programs themselves. Today, the grass-roots practice of NFP has become part of many systems of service delivery, not the least is the diocesan NFP program. The lesson which I have learned over the past 20 years is: the core of NFP is love and the Alpha and Omega of Love is God. So, without further delay, here is my story.



In the summer of 1974 Mary Kay Williams, Associate Director of the Human Life and NFP Foundation in Washington, D.C. asked me if I would develop an NFP training program for a U.S. government contract. Subsequently, I met with Larry Kane, the Director of the Foundation, and some of the board members (see *NFP—Diocesan Activity Report*, Fall 1994, vol. 5, no. 4, for a history of the Foundation.) Dr. John Brennan of Milwaukee had agreed to be the physician for this government contract. He wanted me to attend a meeting at St. John's College in Collegeville, Minnesota. There I listened to many couples describe their growth as loving persons both in using NFP and also in teaching NFP to others.

In designing education and training systems I look for the motivators. At the Collegeville meeting, motivators were most prominent and took my heart by surprise! Couples were talking about a "way of life" learned through self knowledge about their combined fertility and a mutual decision to either abstain or engage in intercourse during

the fertile phase of the cycle. These methods were effective in helping couples plan their family size. In addition, as couples learned to use the methods successfully, they became more loving and other-centered, expressing their love and affection for each other in a myriad of ways other than sexual intercourse.

My professional commitment to NFP occurred at this meeting where many couples discussed the loving dynamics of NFP. After hearing a talk by John and Nancy Ball, NFP of Connecticut, I turned to John Brennan and said, "this is dynamite, I would love to be involved!" And so started a dynamic 20 year development in which government and Church leaders became increasingly more interested in the natural methods . . . and the trend does continue.

In the first government contract we defined the educational design for training teachers of NFP. Site visits to several programs in the United States and Canada provided the basic information to begin the definition process. The most feasible design was a task-

based curriculum which dealt with the major tasks expected for teachers of NFP. It implied both a trainer system to train instructors and supervised NFP services to teach couples learning the methods until they reach autonomy.

In 1974, it seemed reasonable to expect that the NFP teacher in the year 2000 would be someone who: used a natural method; was able to achieve mastery on simple objective tests related to the content of NFP; was able to provide instruction and follow-up to 6-10 client couples (which implies ability to teach); and demonstrate attitudes supportive of NFP. In 1995, it has happened!

Objectives, test items and rating scales were developed for four modules of instruction. Module 1, Fertility Awareness, related to basic physiology of the fertile days of the woman's cycle; Module 2, The Basal Body Temperature Method, used calendar rhythm and temperature as the means to identify the beginning and end of the fertile days (something which was often practiced at the time); Module 3, The Ovulatory Method, used the awareness of a cervical mucus symptom to define the beginning of the fertile days and the fourth day after peak mucus to define the end of the fertile days; and Module 4, The Sympto-thermal Method, used both calculation and cervical mucus to identify the beginning of the fertile days, as well as the third temperature rise and the fourth day after peak mucus to define the end of the fertile days.

A national validation meeting was held in Washington, D.C. during the Fall of 1974 to review and revise objectives and the related content for the instructor training program. At this time, NFP expertise predominantly from the United States along with observers from national agencies and other countries attended.

In December 1975 the World Health Organization (WHO) held a steering committee meeting which included Drs.

A. Kessler, G. Benagiano, M.A.C. Dowling, G. Bialy, Leo Min, Claude Lanctot, Fannie Perry, Jeff Spieler, and myself. At this meeting, the WHO developed a plan and approach for surveying specific countries to identify the number and type of NFP programs worldwide.

In addition, the WHO wanted to collect samples of instructional materials available. In January, 1976 a program survey questionnaire was developed by Dr. Min and myself which included both questions regarding the program information, instructional materials, and the objectives for the training program already developed by the Human Life and NFP Foundation.

In 1976, The Human Life and Natural Family Planning Foundation was awarded a second contract to validate the objective tests, a training check list and attitude scales. In addition, client teaching materials were also developed. During this study, a micro approach to item verification was used to obtain educational, medical, NFP, empirical, technical and WHO revisions of both objectives and test items was accomplished. There was a total of 355 persons in 13 sites throughout the United States who participated in the revision process. The result included a set of instructional objectives and two equivalent forms of multiple-choice tests for each module of instruction. The items were sequentially arranged and each test form had reliability coefficients between 0.93 and 0.95. In addition, client teaching booklets, flip charts and slides were also developed related to Fertility Awareness, The Ovulation Method, and the Sympto-Thermal Method.

In June 1977, the teacher training objectives were shared at the first world congress of the International Federation for Family Life Promotion (IFFLP) held in Cali, Colombia. BLAT, a British educational firm working with the WHO in Geneva had initiated a contract with the WHO to develop a teaching-learning kit

for training users in Third World countries. This kit was later field tested in 8-9 countries, thereby sensitizing the international community to NFP providers as well as governing agencies within those countries. In 1983, the kit was

completed and distributed in English, French, and Spanish to many programs throughout the world.

In 1978, the Foundation implemented a free-standing NFP service program at St. Joseph's Hospital in Lancaster, PA. It was the first formal study involving Title X funding in a private sector medical service. This

study revealed a successful effort of serving approximately 200 clients in approximately 7-8 sites throughout the area. Service standards were specified and published and served as a useful development tool for both the private and public sectors.

In 1977-1978, the Foundation, as well as many other NFP organizations and experts, participated in a series of two bi-regional meetings designed to surface and discuss the issues for development in NFP both in the public and private sectors. It is estimated that these meetings funded by Title X, provided discussion for approximately 3,000 participants over a two year period.

In 1979, through IFFLP, Misereor funded the development of a program evaluation guide. I authored this guide and used as a primary reference the service standards developed in the Lancaster project. In addition, consultation was provided to other national program leaders primarily through the Zonal Meetings of IFFLP.

In 1980, I began work in consultation with the NCCB's Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities. At that time a team of NFP providers and experts developed the *Diocesan Development Plan for NFP*. This document is frequently referred to as the "Pastoral Plan for NFP." It serves as a basic text which guides a diocese in constructing an NFP program. In 1981 then Msgr. James T. McHugh, was

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named director of the DDP/NFP and I became a member of the staff. The DDP oversaw the implementation of the *Plan* and witnessed the appointment of an NFP coordinator or contact person in every diocese. The wide majority of these coordinators were in Family Life offices (as is still true today), in some Health Care offices, and in variety of diocesan offices.

Consultation to the dioceses was at the request of a diocese after the appointment of a diocesan NFP coordinator. Key to this consultation was to assist the bishop in developing a program which situated NFP within the context of marriage and family life. Bishop McHugh and I probably covered most of the country in the early days of this activity. Depending on the needs and resources of each diocese, we were also able to help the dioceses develop the capability to train and certify their teachers and assure the quality of pastoral services to couples. It pleases me so much to know that in 1995, the diocesan NFP programs continue to BE! ■

Postscript

In 1985 Dr. Martin left the staff of the DDP/NFP and continued her work in NFP with the IFFLP. Dr. Martin's responsibilities took her around the globe several times. She helped strengthen and/or establish regional and national NFP programs in countries as diverse as Zambia and Mauritius. In 1988 Bishop McHugh asked Dr. Martin to help the American diocesan NFP programs once more by becoming a member of the Certification Committee (now NFP National Advisory Board). It was that committee which wrote the NCCB's National Standards. Dr. Martin resides in Missouri and is currently a Private Duty Nurse in the rapidly growing field of Home Health Care. She is employed by the Department of Alternate Services at St. John's Mercy Health Care Center in St. Louis. Besides being a loyal NFP advocate, Mary Catherine Martin has a wonderful sense of humor and an inspiring faith. She has contributed much to the NFP community.