EDITORIAL

A story that is sometimes told is about a woman who came walking one grey and pretty dark evening as the rain was falling, and who became worried upon finding a little boy standing in the light of a street lamp, crying deeply. “Dear little friend what is it?” “I am so very sad” the little boy replied, “’cause I have lost my big coin”. “Oh dear oh dear” the woman said compassionately. “But don’t worry I’ll help you look for it”. She bent down, looking carefully in the area where the boy was standing, but she could not find any coin. “Are you sure that you dropped it exactly here?” she asked. “No, I dropped it over there somewhere”, the boy said and pointed to an area some distance away, “but there is more light here where the lamp is”.

This is a situation we recognize also from the scientific world where we stick to methods that we know well instead of paying attention to what method would best match the phenomenon in question. However, if we seriously want to develop ideas and knowledge that will help people to keep or regain health and well-being, we need to let go of the urge to look only where there is light, because it could be that the knowledge we need is where there is darkness and it is hard to see. It could be that the knowledge that we need is not that easily measured or not that easily packed in neat boxes. It could be that the knowledge we need is not that which is being said by our informants but what is intended by them, i.e. the meaning of their narrated experiences. If we do not let go of this hopeless goal of nothing but easily reached knowledge we will one day be as sad as that little boy, we will be standing in full light but we will never ever find the coin.

The International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being has now begun the third year of publishing high-quality studies of international qualitative research on health and well-being. Besides providing new insights into the meanings of health and well-being, the aim of QHW is to participate in the worldwide ambition to strengthen the awareness and impact of qualitative research and its conduct. It is not an easy task owing to the domination of a paradigm that prescribes science as something that happens within stable categories, builds upon dualisms and other dichotomies, and is directed by mathematics and cause-effect laws. Nevertheless, who says that it must be easy? Researchers are extraordinarily well educated people and know how to work hard. We must continue to gain insights into the ontology, epistemology and methodology of scientific work and find out what approaches and strategies we need in order to support health and well-being.

For 2008, we invite more articles of this kind: we want good empirical studies and we want good articles on the philosophy of science. In particular, we want articles that combine the two interests. We encourage prospective authors to pay attention to the philosophical framework of their studies, and we also want authors to consider how their research is meaningful and valid, and how it can be generalized to contexts other than the immediate one. For these purposes, and to support the reading and evaluation of the research, we want authors, in some way, to summarize their research results before they are discussed and reflected upon.

To reach out with our message QHW constantly tries to be more international. Therefore, it is our pleasure to present some new international names on the editorial board. Professor Earnporn Thongkrajai, Khon Kaen University, Thailand, is the author of several books on nursing theory and her research covers a wide range of topics concerned with e.g. women’s health, child survival and reproductive health. She has a deep international interest, not least to bring about Asian health care alliances. Hanna Mayer is professor of nursing science and the leader of the department of nursing science at the University of Vienna, Austria. Her area of expertise is research methodology, as well as patient education and consultancy. She is the author of several books addressing “nursing research”. We also welcome Med. Dr Hans Thulesius, Division of Family Medicine, Lund University on the editorial board. He is Swedish but at the same time international through his close cooperation with Barney Glaser, one of the founders of Grounded Theory. We hope that these and the other distinguished members on our editorial board will take QHW and qualitative research on health and well-being to new levels of international as well as national and contextual insights.

Karin Dahlberg
Co-Editor