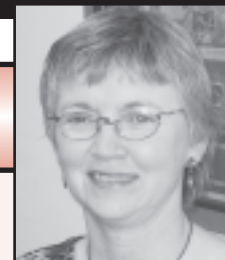


ASK A PRACTICE ADVISOR

by Della Stumborg, RN, Nursing Practice Advisor



Question: As a Registered Nurse in Saskatchewan, how do computers and technology enhance my practice?

As with many other sectors of society, technology is having a huge impact on the nursing profession. "The delivery of health care has been considerably transformed since the 1950s" (p. 1, *Building the Future*, 2005). Nurses in Saskatchewan are participating in developing technology that can enhance RN practice and have a positive affect on patient/client outcomes. In the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) Position Statement Nursing Information and Knowledge Management November 2006, our national association states that "Competencies in information management and the use of communications technology are no longer add-ons to traditional methods of health-care delivery. Rather, these competencies are an integral part of health care and nursing practice " (CNA, 2006).

The use of technology in nursing has been developing and increasing over the past few decades. Nurses have embraced improvements in monitoring equipment and various tools to acquire more accurate and/or consistent objective data about their patients. Nursing Informatics is described as applying computer and information science to nursing for better patient care and outcomes. We welcome technological advances in electronic records, medication orders, nursing information and other essential communications.

The following are some key messages about Nursing Informatics that were developed by RNs across Canada through the CNA Counterparts group on Nursing Informatics.

1. Having the best patient outcomes possible and using resources efficiently depends on collecting clinical evidence, including evidence regarding nursing interventions and outcomes.
2. A growing number of nurses have experience and expertise in health informatics and nursing informatics.
3. Health professionals are called on to practice based on evidence. Nurses could be better supported to do this if clinical care data were collected and aggregated at the national level.

4. Nursing supports a client-centered Pan-Canadian electronic health record that respects and protects the privacy of patient information.
5. Nurses must be involved in all aspects of standards development and implementations of electronic health records.
6. Nursing supports the integration of nursing data into broad multidisciplinary health information systems.
7. Nursing requires standardized language that describes nursing practice across the country and the world.
8. Education of nurses, both initial and continuing education must be supported by the schools of nursing and employers of nursing, in order for nurses to acquire the informatics competencies that are part of today 's practice requirements.

We are living in an exciting time with many advances in technology available to nurses that support safe, competent and ethical nursing care toward optimal patient outcomes.

For further information about Nursing Informatics, please watch for a special issue of the *Canadian Nurse* to be published in May 2007 on Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). If you would like to access a wonderful resource for nurses in Canada and worldwide, log onto the CNA Nursing Portal at www.nurseone.ca

For further information about Nursing Informatics in Saskatchewan, there is a Saskatchewan Nursing Informatics Group (SNIG) contact information:

Eithne Reichert, RN, Saskatoon 306-230-6897 or eithne.reichert@shin.sk.ca or contact Della Stumborg, RN, SRNA Nursing Practice Advisor, at 1-800-667-9945 Ext.237

References:

1. *Building the Future: An integrated strategy for nursing human resources in Canada - Technological Change* (2005). Wang, S., Nagle, L., Li, X., and Wu, C.
2. Canadian Nurses Association (2006). *Nursing Information and Knowledge Management . Position Statement.* Ottawa: Author