



1st National Nursing Informatics Conference 2005 Proceedings

Nurses & Informatics: Transforming Healthcare

Sept 14 – 16th, 2005 – University of Toronto, Ontario

POSTER THEME: Nursing Informatics Innovations in Practice

Innovations in Information Technology

by Lisa Cranley, RN PhD Student

ABSTRACT

Objective: To review the literature on nurses' information needs in the context of clinical decision-making, and to review how nurses and physicians use wireless information technology in practice.

Background: Innovations in information technology such as wireless personal digital assistants (PDAs) can provide a platform for nurses to access relevant practice information at the point of care (POC), and these systems have the potential to improve decision quality and enable nurses to make better-informed decisions.

Method: Theoretical and empirical studies were located from library and information science, health care, decision-making, psychology, and sociology literatures from 1985-2005. Empirical studies on PDA and POC wireless technology applications were reviewed from the engineering /technology and health care literatures.

Results: Studies indicate that to be useful, nurses need information that is relevant, concise, and available. There is a growing literature on physicians' use of PDAs / POC systems in practice. Studies suggest that physicians use these systems most commonly to access drug reference information and practice guidelines, and that these systems improve the quality of physicians' documentation and decision-making. Though little research has investigated nurses' use of wireless technology in practice, studies indicate that overall, nurses perceive PDA / POC systems would increase access and sharing of information, ultimately improving the quality of patient care, and there is beginning evidence that these systems improve the efficiency of nurses' documentation. Future research should examine the use of PDAs among nurses.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Lisa Cranley (RN) is a PhD student in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Toronto and is employed as a Research Coordinator at the Faculty of Nursing on a study involving hospital level outcomes. Lisa is currently completing the Ontario Training Centre Collaborative Diploma Program in Health Services and Policy Research. Lisa has a strong interest in nursing informatics and health services research, and she holds a CIHR Doctoral Fellowship.

