1st National Nursing Informatics Conference 2005 Proceedings
Nurses & Informatics: Transforming Healthcare
Sept 14 – 16th, 2005 – University of Toronto, Ontario

CONCURRENT SESSIONS THEME 3: Nursing Informatics Applications in Education

Identifying Requisite Informatics Competencies for Entry-level Practice

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ABSTRACT

The use of information structures, information technology and communication systems has become ubiquitous within today's health-care system. Given that information plays such a vital role in nursing, nurses in clinical, administration, education and research practice must make efficient use of information in their efforts to improve patient-care processes (Travis & Brennan, 1998). This ongoing process of incorporating information and communication technologies into practice has affected nursing in several ways. Nurses have recognized, as have all health-care professionals, that practitioners need specific technological and information-management skills and knowledge if they are to make effective use of information and of the systems that provide access to the information. It is important for nurses at the beginning of their careers to develop a sense of the opportunities that information technology offers as well as the obligations that it imposes.

By including nursing informatics (NI) as part of the requisite entry-level nursing competencies, we can help to nurture a technologically and information management aware and responsive nursing culture. My proposed presentation is based on the work I undertook for a major essay, which was partial requirement for the MSN degree program. In this work I explored information technology and its relationship with nursing practice in an effort to identify the nursing informatics competencies necessary for entry-level clinical practice, and make recommendations with respect to nursing education and the development of curricula. In addition to an overview of this exploration, suggested revisions to the current NI definition, conceptual framework and competencies currently in the public purview will be presented.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Beverly Mitchell graduated from nursing school in 1979 and pursued a career as an OR nurse after completing a post-grad in OR nursing at the U of A in 1982. She followed on this path for many years and it was there that she became involved with computer applications in clinical practice. In 1997, she graduated from McMaster University with a BScN and her interest in informatics led her to graduate studies. In May of this year, she graduated UBC with a MSN. Currently, she is employed as a clinical analyst for a peri-operative information management system in Vancouver.