



Open Letter to Nurses

Information for nurses working in the Winnipeg health region.

February 2009

In this issue: Information Technology for nursing.

With each new year we notice the working landscape changing. It is a necessity to provide nurses with access to Information Technology (IT) in order to support nursing care. IT has tremendous potential to improve the practice of nursing and as technology advances it becomes incredibly user-friendly making it easier to learn, teach and experience.

There are many exciting developments in today's electronic world for nurses to use to make their jobs better and to improve patient care. Technology will have an impact on daily clinical practice. It can improve patient outcomes and patient safety, provide information needed to support nursing practice, connect nurses and groups of nurses, and ensure access to timely, evidence based information.

Across health care sectors, information technology (IT) will promote collaborative patient-centered care and improve communication between health care providers and patients.

For nurses, the largest population of health care providers, the benefits of electronic health care could be the most significant. IT has already improved the way we learn and study; distance learning, TeleHealth and multimedia are a few examples. Integrating computers into nursing practice is more challenging, but today in some areas nurses no longer have to jot down vital signs and remember routine charting information until they get back to the nursing station – they have portable computers that can be used at a patient's bedside. By taking the time to learn how IT can improve your functions and being patient with the learning curve of others, many more benefits will come.

Nursing feedback is the most crucial part to the process. Feedback from you ensures continued adjustment or improvement to IT implementations. In the Winnipeg health region there are several

IT initiatives in place or coming up that you can learn about and provide feedback on.

The Emergency Department Information System (EDIS) is being used in all hospitals to provide a global view of the emergency department by tracking patient stay throughout their ER visit, from triage desk to discharge. Staff has colour-coded monitors to easily view how long patients are waiting, the number of patients, lab results and reassessment status. EDIS also includes easy tracking of patient histories in the ER to assist with patient treatment.

The Hospital Information System Project (HISP), a province-wide initiative designed to improve access to patient information through a central electronic information system, an Electronic Patient Record, went live in St. Boniface Hospital in 2008. For nurses, the system allows immediate access to orders and results, provides immediate access to patient demographics, medication and test results, improves access to

information online such as suggested medications or drug alerts, decreases the need for paper, decreases errors and increases patient safety.

C-HOBIC is the Canadian Health Outcomes for Better Information and Care project and works to develop a standardized approach for collecting and organizing data on health outcomes. In Manitoba, nurses in long-term care and home care programs will collect patient outcome information, as they already were in MDS assessments, for C-HOBIC. C-HOBIC assessments can then measure sensitive outcomes such as functional status, bladder continence, therapeutic self-care, symptom management and safety outcomes. This will result in a clear picture of which intervention and which best practice guidelines result in the best outcomes for patients and residents, and enhance the quality of care they receive. Manitoba's project began in

the fall of 2008 and has an expected completion date of October 2009.

The Critical Care database is an IT system that provides timely demographic and clinical information. The information is used to support quality and safety initiatives, administrative decisions, and research activities which all have a positive impact on the quality of patient care.

Critical Care database information has been used to determine the city-wide bed complement and staffing resource allocation, putting the right patient with the right resources and maximizing critical care resources in the region. Information from the database supported an increase in staffing resources to increase regional critical care capacity in response to identified stresses on tertiary beds. Clinical information is used to implement quality initiatives to address such issues as Ventilator Associated Pneumonia, central line infections and red cell infusions sepsis, to name a few. Researchers from all disciplines use the database for numerous clinical studies.

All of these IT systems make access to timely evidence-based information easier and quicker for nurses so they can focus on their primary role of providing quality care. These systems will connect the collective knowledge of nurses to improve patient flow, patient outcomes and patient safety.

The Canadian Nursing Informatics Association (CNIA) says, "Nurses are the key to the implementation of informatics in all areas of Canadian health care. We are the largest group of health professionals, we are technologically savvy, and have the clients' best interest at heart."

The Manitoba Nursing Informatics Association (MNIA) is an acknowledged special interest group of the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba (CRNM) and is affiliated with CNIA. One of

the goals of MNIA is to facilitate educational opportunities to all nurses in Manitoba. For information about the association, visit MNIA's new website <http://www.mnia.ca>.

To learn more about IT that will support nursing practice, here are a few websites:

ehealth website:

www.manitoba-ehealth.ca

Canadian Nursing Informatics Association:

www.cnia.ca

Canada's National Health Informatics Association:

www.coachorg.com

A great contact for Nursing Informatics in the region is Patricia Rothney, the Manager of Nursing Informatics Strategy for Manitoba eHealth. Patricia's role is focused on the strategic objectives of nurses. She works collaboratively with provincial nursing leaders and Nursing Leadership Council members to plan, initiate and oversee nursing informatics priorities and initiatives. The goal is to have clinical system tools that result in improvements in care and the care experience.

A resolution nurses can keep this year is to learn something new in information technology (hard *not* to with so much going on!). Being open to new technology and providing feedback on how that technology is working will be very beneficial to your work environment and your patients.

Jan Currie



The newly revised Master of Nursing (MN) program will be launched in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Manitoba in September 2009.

Changes to the program include:

~ Admissions deadline is now April 1.

~ Prior to admission, students are expected to contact prospective faculty members to obtain an advisor for their program. *Information regarding each faculty member is on the Faculty of Nursing web site.*

~ Prospective students should contact Karen Dempsey, Graduate Program Student Advisor at 474-7334 for info.

The Faculty of Nursing would like to speak at Nursing Leadership or Practice Councils (or other venues) at various facilities/ practice settings about the new program. To arrange a presentation, please contact Kim Schellenberg at 474-6216 or Kim_Schellenberg@umanitoba.ca

There's a **new email address** to send your questions, comments and nursing stories too!

Write to:

wrha_nursing@wrha.mb.ca

Submissions and comments are always appreciated - keep them coming to the new address!



Access to the current issue and past issues of Open Letter to Nurses is available on INSITE. Submissions and comments are welcome.

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