Title: Nursing Informatics Competencies: Self Assessment

PURPOSE

Nursing Informatics, a term coined to describe the integration of nursing science with information and computer science, has developed into a mandatory focus for all registered nurses on a global scale. For the past four decades, literature, research and a growing body of practice have addressed the theoretical and practical aspects of informatics in nursing.

A web-site was created to offer registered nurses a web-based, free, professional development initiative to support them to self-assess their nursing informatics competencies and learning needs. Various competency taxonomies have been reviewed and integrated in the process. Tutorials and other planning initiatives were also created to help nurses begin the process of self-directed education in informatics. The intention of this work is to give nurses a preliminary analysis of their current expertise and learning needs in the realm of informatics in nursing. This site is available at: http://www.nursing-informatics.com/niassess/index.html

METHODOLOGY

A careful examination of existing taxonomies, recommendations and literature related to technology user levels and competencies was done to identify a common model to use in this initiative. Three levels of expertise were identified, namely: Users, Modifiers, and Innovators. As well, three categories of competencies were addressed: Technical, Utility, and Leadership. Technical competencies related to the hands-on use of computer and other health-related equipment and software. Utility competencies included the ability to apply evidenced-based practice, critical thinking and accountability in the use of selected technical applications in health care. Leadership competencies related to the ethical and management competencies necessary to utilize technology in health care in ways that protect client rights, safety and support quality assurance. Included in these assessments is the P.A.T.C.H. (Pretest of Attitudes toward Computers in Healthcare) Assessment Scale, available in both downloadable document and online formats.

RESULTS/OUTCOMES

A comprehensive list of technological, utility, and leadership competencies were defined and described for each of the three levels of User. Accompanying self-tests were provided to allow nurses to assess their own level of expertise in the list of competencies addressed. As well, tutorials were provided or linked to help nurses begin to address their own particular learning needs to develop the competencies that they wished to develop. Personal learning plan worksheets were also provided to assist nurses in articulating their own learning goals and plan to address their perceived needs.

CONCLUSIONS

Nurses need innovative, easily accessible ways to address their own nursing informatics learning needs in order to contribute and participate in the burgeoning force called e-health. Nurses are the largest body of health care providers in Canada, dedicated to promoting health, prevention, reliable client

education, and support. This initiative is one way to help nurses develop expertise in nursing informatics in a cost-effective, easy to use, perennially accessible way, from the comfort of their own home, office, or workplace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Further on-line initiatives to target nurses who find it challenging to attend post-secondary or continuing courses due to time, workload, and financial factors are needed. One example is the Nursing Informatics E-Rounds initiative provided by the Canadian Nursing Informatics Association (CNIA) and Longwoods E-learning at: http://cnia.ca/erounds.html The CNIA is continuing to plan further learning initiatives for Canadian nurses to help them meet their personal and professional learning needs and to support nurses who wish to specialize in the Nursing Informatics specialist field. As President-Elect, I also encourage all Canadian nurses to consider becoming a member of this associate group to the Canadian Nurses Association.

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June is completing her PhD at the University of BC in Technology Education, Curriculum Studies. Her focus is educational technology, informatics, aesthetics and e-learning for nursing. Currently, she is presently completing her PhD dissertation work on the faculty perceptions of nursing informatics and education culture. June is currently the President-Elect and Director of Communications for the Canadian Nursing Informatics Association (CNIA). She assumes the President role in the Fall of 2007. She is also the Editor in Charge of Virtual Nursing Practice and Culture for the Online Journal of Nursing Informatics (OJNI) and a member of the OJNI Board of Directors. As well, she is the Editor in Charge of the Canadian Nursing Informatics Journal She has taught Nursing Informatics related theory and practice content to nursing students and nurses since 1990 at Kwantlen University College in Surrey, BC and presents education and other nursing informatics related information through her website Nursing Informatics.com at http://nursing-informatics.com.