NURSING MATTERS

*Nursing Matters* fact sheets provide quick reference information and international perspectives from the nursing profession on current health and social issues.

What is nursing informatics?

- Nursing informatics is the integration of nursing, its information and information management with information processing and communication technology to support the health of people worldwide. (International Medical Informatics Association Nursing Informatics Special Interest Group, 1998).

- Nurses who work in the specialty of informatics use its integrative processes to collect, process and manage data and information to support nursing practice, administration, education, research and the expansion of nursing knowledge. (American Nurses’ Association, 2002).

- Nursing informatics is a critical component of health care. The health informatics environment encompasses the understanding, skills and tools that enable the sharing and use of information to deliver healthcare and promote health. (British Medical Informatics Society, 2004).

Why is informatics important to nursing?

- Informatics can make nursing practice visible in local, national, and international health care data sets, thus empowering nurses with information to influence policy.

- Information is a critical component of effective decision-making and high quality nursing practice. The information and knowledge gained through nursing informatics can bring increased awareness and understanding of nursing and health care issues.

- Nursing Informatics is committed to maintaining a clinical perspective and promoting research that would bear directly on improving patient care.

Nursing informatics organisations exist worldwide. A short list of examples includes: the Australian Nursing Informatics Council, Brazilian Nursing Association Nursing Informatics Group, British Computer Society Nursing Specialist Group, European Nursing Informatics (ENI), International Medical Informatics Association Nursing Informatics Special Interest Group (IMIA-NI), NURSINFO: Hong Kong, Spanish Society of Nursing Informatics and Internet (SEEI) and Swiss Special Interest Group Nursing Informatics (SIG-NI).
Visibility of nursing
A unified nursing language system will make nursing data visible in healthcare systems. Without a unified nursing language system, data can not be compared and interchanged across sources. Researchers have identified terminology standards as an essential building block for the development of information systems that support clinical decision-making and evidence-based practice.

A major ICN programme for the development of a unified nursing language system is the International Classification for Nursing Practice (ICNP®). The ICNP® supports both the existing work in nursing terminology development and advances nursing terminology development that is compliant with international standards in a manner consistent with other health disciplines.

Integration of nursing data in clinical information systems
Integration of health care data is essential in an environment of multidisciplinary health care across multiple delivery systems. With increased globalization, we must promote information systems that will facilitate communication and data sharing across multiple practitioners, delivery settings, geographic settings and languages. The systems also must support effective communications with clients and families.

The integration of health care information systems is essential for the realisation of an Electronic Health Record. Integrated systems also will enhance clinical, administrative and health-policy decision-making capabilities.

Supporting evidence-based practice
Research in nursing informatics will examine and enhance the use of clinical information systems to support evidence-based practice. Clinical information systems can facilitate access to guidelines and references of best practice within nurses’ workflow. Similarly, using ICNP® in information systems will stimulate the creation of clinical data warehouses and encourage the examination of clinical nursing data, together with administrative data, to evaluate practice and generate new knowledge.

Summary
The electronic age of the 21st century presents us with the potential for a platform for health care delivery unlike any known to date. ICN believes that nursing must participate and influence advances in informatics to said global populations in attaining ever-improving levels of health and well-being.
The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is a federation of more than 130 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality nursing care for all and sound health policies globally.

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References