



Nursing Specialty: What is Nursing Informatics?

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Nursing Informatics is a relatively new specialty in healthcare. Informatics nurses facilitate the marriage of information technology and nursing to promote the integration of data, information, and technology to support patient care. They often function as liaisons between Information Systems (I/S) Departments and Clinical Services.

Informatics nurses enjoy a variety of responsibilities including the selection, development, tailoring, and testing of clinical information systems, application support following deployment, staff education and assistance in clinical areas implementing new software programs, report development, participation in patient safety and quality programs and reviews, and research. Examples of informatics projects include applying medication barcode technology to an existing system, developing electronic physician entry order sets, and implementing a clinical documentation system for critical care.

Other examples of informatics responsibilities include:

- Mining patient data warehouses to look for trends and patterns between patient outcomes and care provided by nurses
- Studying the impact of systems on error reduction and patient safety

- Integrating data from one system to another in order to be accessible to all disciplines of the health care team
- Reducing redundant documentation
- Realizing opportunities for the collection, storage, and use of health information
- Embracing practical applications of technology to enhance bedside care and education
- Serving as resources for computer generated educational materials, web page development, telemedicine programs, and clinical support applications

The educational requirements for nursing informatics may vary but many nurses who enter this field have a minimum of a master's degree in nursing or health care, education in computer science or information technology or experience working with computer systems, and a project management or education background.

A barrier to the successful deployment of a clinical system is the reluctance of the part of clinical staff to accept technological advances. The disinclination witnessed in health care providers toward technology is often attributed to a misunderstanding of how the technology will improve care and rapid clinical decision processes and a strong fear of computers. It is

not unusual for informatics nurses to hear the statement, "I was afraid I was going to break something." Informatics nurses understand this reluctance and become fervent champions of systems in order to effect change. They do so through educational efforts and resource availability. They may tap into 'Super Users,' clinical staff who demonstrate curiosity and a desire to learn more about the systems as one method. The informatics nurse will provide Super Users with advanced education about the systems and use them to enhance learning on the unit and to function as bedside resources for those staff who struggle with technology.

Essential to good outcomes in health care is the ability to process and receive information quickly and accurately. In the fast-paced world of nursing, robust clinical information systems are crucial to assist decision making processes rapidly and precisely. Informatics plays a large role in this process by streamlining documentation, integrating safety measures online, and participating in new, innovative technologies like e-health, telemedicine, medication safety distribution systems, privacy protection programs, and wireless advances.

Call for Nominations: Courage, Commitment and Compassion Award



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2006

Chances are a Pennsylvania RN has touched your life. If you have experienced or witnessed an amazing display of professionalism and superior care by a Pennsylvania RN, now is the time to recognize this extraordinary nurse by nominating this individual for PA State Nurses Association annual Courage, Commitment and Compassion Award.

Nomination process:

- Submit an essay of 500 words or less, explaining why you believe your nominee deserves this award (*essay must be typed*).
- You must complete a nomination form and then email, fax or send completed forms to address listed below.
- For a complete list of rules and all required forms for submission, please go to this website: www.panurses.org.
- Winners will be honored at the Awards Ceremony on Sat. Oct. 7, 2006 during PA State Nurses Association Annual Summit.
- **Nominations and Completed Forms are due no later than 5 p.m. on July 31, 2006.**

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