ADDRESSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE BETWEEN NURSING PRACTICE AND EDUCATION USING A PERSONAL DIGITAL ASSISTANT (PDA)

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Abstract
The nursing practice environment is currently in the midst of change as nurses undergo the shift in documenting care from the historical print paradigm to the contemporary digital paradigm. As the electronic health record becomes a working reality, educators are faced with the challenge of preparing graduates of the pre-registration programmes for the digital world of practice. Although students of undergraduate pre-registration nursing programmes are required by the Nursing Council of New Zealand to have a minimum of 1500 clinical hours within the reality of the health care delivery sector they have no opportunity to use the associated electronic health record networks due to the correlation between levels of access and employee status, which is designed to protect consumers of health care and health providers. Coupled with this is a necessity for graduates to be proficient with the electronic health record and with the legalities and ethics that surround the phenomenon.

International trends indicate that the bedside collection of patient based information using point-of-care technology will be the modality of the future. The School of Health Science, UNITEC has addressed this issue for their students by writing a database programme that emulates the real world of nursing practice and enables the necessary learning to occur based upon sound pedagogical principles. The programme is introduced over the three-year duration of the nursing student’s education, in that students use a desktop version initially to capture the academic requirements of their clinical experiences and skills mastery, culminating in using a PDA in their final year within community clinical placements to construct ‘pseudo’ electronic health records and access nursing specific applications that provide learning resources from the point-of-care delivery.

The ‘pseudo’ electronic record becomes part of a growing database on a server located within the educational organisation. The database then provides students with a record of their clinical function over a period of time, whilst at the same time informing curriculum development by providing faculty with data concerning the nursing problems that students in the field face and the nursing actions that they take accordingly.

The authors will present the pedagogical principles associated with integration of the technology in curriculum and will provide participants with the opportunity to use the PDA version of the programme, connecting to a server and accessing the learning resources that nursing students use in the field by using this contemporary learning technology.