

Preface



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Guest Editor

Evidence surrounds us that technology is changing rapidly and affects us all in our daily lives. For example, most of us can hardly remember a world without cell phones. Today it is not uncommon to watch people multitasking in all walks of life while scrolling and texting on their Blackberries. Electronic mail seems to hold us hostage!

Nursing education is no different. I developed simulations in the early 80s, long before there were any high-fidelity simulators. We created a successful labor and delivery simulation on a 12-inch videodisc that allowed for either 30 minutes of video on each side of the disc or 24,000 individual frames. The result was that after we programmed a connecting computer, students could actually see the results of their decisions without threat to or interaction with a live patient. I have since framed that 12-inch videodisc in my office, and many who see it think it is a platinum record (for after all Vanderbilt is in Nashville, TN, the music city!). They have no historical framework for a 12-inch videodisc. I also developed an interactive tour of the Sigma Theta Tau International Virginia Henderson Library back in 1994, which we put onto a CD. One of those was buried in a time capsule at Headquarters to be opened sometime in the future. We had to laugh when we began to guess what people in the future might think was actually on that CD, because we expect they will not be able to play it. At least they could still use it to play Frisbee!

For all our frustration in trying to stay current with technology, we also realize that it holds the key to our ability to embrace nursing knowledge. It is only through technology that we stand the chance of organizing all of our data into information, information into knowledge, and thus use that knowledge to demonstrate wisdom. Our human brains do not themselves possess the ability to store and process such multitudes of data, nor do we have the ability to pass that process along to others as easily as the computer programs we create. It is imperative then that we master the technology tools to harness them into the knowledge-building activities that we need for the domain of nursing.

Nursing educators have been at the forefront of teaching technology skills to students, faculty, and staff, but have just begun to realize the potential of informatics use. Let me remind you that the word technology is not interchangeable with informatics. Technology is a tool that we use to assist us in the transition of data to information to knowledge to wisdom (which is informatics, and in our case, given that the domain is

nursing, is called nursing informatics). Isn't there an intelligence that we faculty possess when we methodically design our nursing curriculum so that it is appropriately leveled and when completed meets our terminal objectives? How are we using technology to help us guide and gauge our students' progress? How do we know when students expand their critical thinking skills? Is there a way to integrate this growth from the simulated setting into the clinical setting? Isn't there a way to create a "student dashboard" so that students and faculty can actually see such progress? This is an example of nursing educational informatics.

We are in an era of designing our technology tools to better enable these educational informatics transactions. This edition of *Nursing Clinics of North America* does not present the end products of such a transition, but rather a delineation of technology tools that when used properly in the educational arena will start us on our productive way. Stay tuned for a later edition that might present such advanced examples of informatics use! In the meantime, enjoy this issue, which serves to help you better understand the technology tools that serve as an interface to the effective use of nursing educational informatics. My thanks are extended to all the busy authors who saw the value and potential of sharing their expertise with you so that together we can make a difference in educational informatics.

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