



# BETTER HEALTH CARE, BETTER PATIENT OUTCOMES: AN E-NURSING STRATEGY



## THE EVOLUTION OF HEALTH CARE AND NURSING

Nursing has evolved dramatically in recent years. Many of the changes have been driven by advances in information and communications technology (ICT). The electronic tools now at nurses' disposal are radically improving their ability to efficiently and accurately assess and treat their patients.

ICT is no longer an add-on to traditional methods of health care, but rather an integrated, integral part of practice. As Canada seeks to maintain its leadership position in the health-care field, and to continuously improve the effectiveness of the health-care system, it will be important for nurses to improve their competencies and their use of ICT in their own practice.

## SMARTER DECISION-MAKING

ICT initiatives such as electronic health records, telehealth, databases, e-mail and Internet resources enhance the decision-making process. They give nurses access to timely, evidence-based and expert information, enabling them to make swifter, better-informed judgments on behalf of their patients. The result is safer patient care and better health outcomes.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Following in-depth analysis of the changing health-care environment and consultation with nurses across the country, the Canadian Nurses Association has defined three directions for an e-nursing strategy that will guide Canada forward and ensure positive change.

### Access

Nurses can only reap the full benefits technology resources have to offer if they seek them out and incorporate them into their daily practice. As such, access to ICT must be improved. Health-care organizations must acknowledge this need and take the steps necessary to facilitate connectivity – by extending broadband infrastructure to ensure wider access to the Internet, and by acquiring computers, personal digital assistants (PDAs) and other necessary hardware and software.

Health-care organizations are beginning to acknowledge the necessity of providing nurses with access to ICT that supports nursing care, yet the implementation of such tools needs to be accelerated.

### Competency

Understandably, technology can be intimidating, particularly for nurses who have been practising for years without it. And yet, as ICT has advanced, it has become more user-friendly, making the experience of engaging with it simpler.

Development and ongoing use of ICT skills are key to improving nurses' competencies. It is necessary that ICT competencies be embedded in undergraduate and graduate nursing curricula and in continuing education.



## Participation

ICT has tremendous potential to improve the practice of nursing, if applied in appropriate, useful ways. Nurses' insights into how this technology can enhance care are invaluable. As *knowledge workers* in this technological age, it is essential that nurses play an increased role in the development of ICT solutions. By communicating changes and needs in their practice settings, they can ensure the right ICT tools are selected and implemented for maximum patient benefit.



## Strategic Partnerships

Collaboration among the following groups will be critical in advancing the e-nursing strategy.

### IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION

If Canadian health-care organizations are to truly benefit from what ICT has to offer, nurses must be actively involved in the related decision-making and development. They must seek out opportunities to provide input, and administrators must welcome that input.

#### Nurses in Clinical Practice

- Participate in ICT initiatives, identify needs and evaluate possible solutions
- Increase competence in use of ICT
- Access multiple sources of information for evidence-based practice

#### Employers and Administrators

- Recognize ICT as a tool of professional nursing practice
- Support involvement of nurses in ICT initiatives
- Encourage adoption of ICT that supports nursing practice

#### Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministries

- Ensure participation of nurses in planning and decision-making related to ICT
- Ensure broadband access is available to all Canadian nurses

#### Nursing Organizations – Professional Associations, Regulatory Bodies and Unions

- Provide leadership for nurses' involvement in ICT
- Recognize ICT competencies as part of entry-level and continuing competence requirements

#### Educators and Researchers

- Incorporate ICT competencies into curricula
- Develop research programs to optimize nurses' use of ICT

For more information, request a copy of CNA's report *E-Nursing Strategy for Canada* online at [info@cna-aiic.ca](mailto:info@cna-aiic.ca).



THE CANADIAN NURSES PORTAL

NurseONE / INF-Fusion, is a personalized, interactive web-based resource to help nurses in Canada and around the world manage their careers, connect with colleagues and health-care experts, and access information to support their nursing practice.

This Internet portal is a significant development in CNA's e-nursing strategy for Canada.

The Canadian Nurses Association calls on nurses in all areas of practice to work with our health-care partners in ongoing partnerships that ensure nursing will make its best contribution to the future health-care of Canadians. We must all work toward a health-care system in Canada that uses ICT optimally and effectively to provide the highest quality of care possible.

