The Nursing Specialist Group

The INFOrmed Touch Series

Volume 1 - Sharing Information: Key issue for the nursing professions

First published March 1997 - ISSN 0901865 72 9
Edited by Denise E Barnett
Prepared for the web by Rod Ward

Introduction

Denise E. Barnett
Editor

The opportunities are increasing for nurses, midwives and health visitors to use larger amounts of information and to explore it in greater depth now that the technology is more accessible. With the opportunities come other challenges to ensure that the standard of professional practice is not reduced, and that patient privacy is maintained.

The British Computer Society has had a Nursing Specialist Group (NSG) for over ten years and some of these issues have been explored through the pages of its quarterly journal 'Information Technology in Nursing and other health care professions', and through its annual conferences.

In 1996 the National Health Service in England saw the steady expansion of a network of computers able to share information between the general practitioner's surgery, the local health authority and hospitals. In parallel there could also be access to the global computer networks via an electronic gateway to the Internet. It therefore seemed appropriate to share with a wider audience information about the development of information management in clinical practice, general management, nurse education and research,

The NSG aims to do this through a series of booklets, of which this is the first. The Information Management Group of the NHS Executive has recognised that it will be some time before all nurses, midwives and health visitors have access to computers and therefore has assisted in funding a wide distribution of the booklets. In time the NSG hope to make the same material available in electronic form.

The booklet is organised in three sections, starting with practical examples of how sharing information can help achieve improvements in clinical practice and in services to patients. This is followed by descriptions of some of the national projects which are intended to make it easier for professionals to share information using computers. The implications for professional accountability are also addressed. The third section provides an international flavour by incorporating three papers from the fourth European Summer School of Nursing Informatics which was held in Northern Ireland in 1994. Nurses across Europe and in North America have been working together to share ideas and the many ways in which they can be applied to clinical practice.
The BCS Nursing Specialist Group is also working closely with the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Midwives and the Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association through the Nursing Professions Information Group. That Group is clear that the focus should be on the practical application of information to enhance healthcare. The series will therefore focus on practice. We hope you will find within it ideas for your own area of clinical interest. If you would like to share your ideas on using information with a wider audience please contact the editor of ITIN on EDITIN@aol.com