



International Nurses Day - 12 May 2009

Delivering Quality, Serving Communities – Nurses Leading Care Innovations



Royal College of Nursing, Australia (RCNA) and the Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) represent Australian nursing within the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and are proud to celebrate International Nurses Day on 12 May 2009. The theme chosen by ICN for this year is Delivering Quality, Serving Communities: Nurses Leading Care Innovations.

Delivering Quality, Serving Communities – Nursing Innovation

The focus for this year's International Nurses Day (IND) is 'Nursing Innovation'. ICN wants to draw attention to the new challenges and opportunities facing the nursing profession. Specifically, there continues to be a growing need to combat global health challenges by providing 'equitable, safe and effective health services, while at the same time containing costs'.¹ Nursing innovation is an important lever for progress and change within health care systems and nurses 'are critically positioned to provide creative and innovative solutions that make a real difference to the day-to-day lives of patients, organisations, communities and the nursing profession'.²

Why do we need to innovate?

On a global scale innovative solutions are needed in the face of health challenges such as ageing populations, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, increases in non-communicable diseases, poverty, inadequate resources and workforce shortages. These challenges require creativity in the way nurses approach and deliver health care. There is great potential and scope for undertaking innovation that could lead to improvements in quality, safety and cost effectiveness as well as better health promotion, disease management and disease prevention. The requirement for new approaches is particularly critical in developing nations and in rural areas where access to health care services can be limited. Nurses have been responsible for developing innovative solutions that make it possible to deliver an enhanced level of health care service to many geographically challenged and socio-economically disadvantaged communities.

Nurses as innovators – the future

Nurses worldwide have developed initiatives to address these challenges and ICN case studies have shown that many efforts have resulted in significant improvements in the health of individuals, targeted populations and health care systems.³ It is therefore especially important to promote nursing as a profession of innovators, to support new improved workplace cultures, to advocate for opportunities to be creative, and to share ideas, acknowledging nursing's evidence based contribution to successful innovation.⁴

Nursing innovation in Australia

The landscape of Australian health and aged care, characterised by ageing populations, workforce shortages, chronic disease, health inequities and growing demand on services, poses many serious challenges for all health professionals. Addressing these challenges requires radically new solutions in order to provide better quality, cost effective and accessible health care services.

Innovation in nursing practice – a case study

There is compelling evidence that health system change management processes engaging nurses and promoting nurse-led innovation can substantially improve clinical practices. Recently in Australia a focus on fostering nursing practice innovation and identifying excellence has aimed to improve nursing practice designs to better manage workflows and, therefore, reduce ever increasing work pressures.⁵ The Flinders Medical Centre in South Australia has undertaken an institutional reform program with a lean thinking approach which applies a plan-do-study-act cycle of change that promotes a culture of reflective improvement and innovation.⁶

1. International Council of Nurses. (2009). *Delivering Quality, Serving Communities – Nurses Leading Care innovations*, IND Kit 2009. Retrieved March 19, 2009 from <http://www.icn.ch/indkit2009.pdf>.

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

4. *ibid.*

5. Royal College of Nursing, Australia. (2008). *Submission to National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission May 2008*. Retrieved March 19, 2009 from http://www.rcna.org.au/policy/2008_submissions.

6. *ibid.*



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This Redesigning Care Program applied six simple rules to redesign care. These were to: see things through the patients' eyes; find a better way of doing things; look at the whole picture; respect the ideas and work of others; give frontline staff the time and tools to tackle the problem; and take small steps as well as big leaps.⁷ The Redesigning Care Program resulted in positive outcomes for safety, quality, staff job satisfaction and broader patient care.⁸

The success of this program demonstrates the potential for the broader application across the health care system of lean thinking change management to improve patient care, reduce health care cost and ensure that Australia's health care systems are prepared for future growth in demand. This example also highlights the importance of recognising the central role nursing plays in health care reform and the need for nurses to be at the forefront in addressing health care challenges.

Other examples of Australian nursing innovation include:

Ward structure as a therapeutic tool

– more information can be found on the ICN innovations database at www.icn.ch/innovations

NSW regional community dialysis service

– more information can be found in a discussion paper by M. Chiarella (2008) – *New and emerging nurse-led models of primary health care* at www.nhhrc.org.au

Primary health care in Australia: a nursing and midwifery consensus view,

– refer to www.anf.org.au

What can you do?

Nurses have an important responsibility to share their knowledge of and experiences with nursing innovations. This responsibility extends beyond sharing innovation within immediate workplaces - nurses are encouraged to be proactive in ensuring innovative ideas are promoted throughout the wider nursing profession and health care sector at large.

The ICN has developed an 'Innovations Database' to ensure that innovative nurse-led projects are promoted and shared.⁹ ICN encourages anyone with a nursing innovation to submit details to the database for utilisation amongst nurses, other health care professionals, employers, government, industry and the general public.¹⁰

Australian nurses are encouraged to notify RCNA and ANF of innovation in Australian nursing so we can actively promote and inform nurses and other health professionals of innovations occurring in our health care system. Such collaboration within the nursing profession is key to delivering the best possible health care. Please visit our websites to share your experiences www.rcna.org.au and www.anf.org.au.

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is a federation of 130 national nurses' associations representing over 12 million nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses for nurses since 1899, ICN is the international voice of nursing and works to ensure sound health policies across the globe and quality care for all. Royal College of Nursing, Australia (RCNA) in collaborative partnership with the Australian Nursing Federation (ANF), is the Australian member of ICN .

7. Flinders Medical Centre. (2009). Redesigning Care. Retrieved March 23, 2009 from <http://www.flinders.sa.gov.au/redesigningcare/pages/overview/>.

8. O'Neill S. (2009). *Nurses key to the patient journey, nursing works: a model for continuous improvement*. Unpublished material.

9. <http://www.icn.ch/innovations/about.htm>

10. International Council of Nurses. (2009). *Delivering Quality, Serving Communities – Nurses Leading Care innovations*, IND Kit 2009. Retrieved March 19, 2009 from <http://www.icn.ch/indkit2009.pdf>.