

Nurses Lack of Computer Skills Holding Back Profession, Says Study

A study published in the September issue of the *American Journal of Nursing* (AJN) found that many US registered nurses are not ready to engage in evidenced-based practice, considered the gold standard to clinical problem solving, due to gaps in computer skills and limited access to quality information resources.

The nursing profession's tendency to practice nursing based on what they learned in nursing school presents a serious dilemma, according to Diane Pravikoff, author of the study and managing editor of the *Online Journal of Clinical Innovations*. "Given the average age of today's nurse is over 40, nursing school was many years ago," she said.

"The community and patients demand a professional practice based on the most up-to-date information, and there are healthcare providers who may not be prepared to meet these demands because they don't know how to find information or don't have the tools to obtain it," said Pravikoff.

The study found that only 18% of nurses had access to the CINAHL database, and only 40% had access to Medline. Ninety-eight percent had access to the Web. Many respondents said they believe they are not adequately prepared to appraise research and interpret its usefulness for clinical decisionmaking. Only 19% said they are confident in their abilities to search CINAHL; only 36% said they are confident when it comes to Medline.

"These barriers must be addressed if the largest group of healthcare providers in the nation is to embrace a culture of evidence-based practice," said Diana Mason, editor-in-chief of AJN. "Integrating EBP into nursing requires a multifaceted approach that involves students, educators, clinicians, and administrators working collectively to facilitate a change."



BAD DEBT

PwC Report Contains Charity Care Recommendations for Hospitals



"Charity Care Strategies for Hospitals in a Changing Landscape," a 44-page report from PricewaterhouseCoopers Healthcare practice, is available for download from the PwC Web site (registration required).

The report is based on interviews with 15 healthcare leaders and more than 100 hospital finance executives from not-for-profit hospitals, teaching hospitals, and for-profit

hospitals. It states that uncompensated care increased 20% from 1999 to 2003 and that the true value of the charity care provided by hospitals may be greater since many hospitals report that at least part of their bad debt could be classified as charity care.

The report recommends staffing patient accounting areas with skilled employees who are well trained on the charity care process (and preferably multilingual), working with patients on payment plans before sending accounts to collection agencies, and simplifying qualification procedures for financial assistance. (For more advice on lowering bad debt, see our article on page 32.)

TECHNOLOGY

Spyglass Releases Report on RFID Trends

Spyglass Consulting has published the results of interviews with 100 healthcare organizations regarding the use of RFID solutions. The study found less than 23% of organizations are using passive RFID technology. Interviewees cited lack of industry-wide standards, less expensive bar code solutions, and a lack of government mandates.

Still, 45% of respondents said they expect to install RFID equipment to track mobile devices (10% said they currently do). Ninety-two percent of those surveyed said network infrastructure was a barrier to deployment. More than half of those interviewed named funding, costs, immature technology, and workflow integration as barriers.

Information and pricing on the report, "Healthcare Without Bounds: Trends in RFID," is available at www.spyglass-consulting.com.