

SHARING THE LIVED EXPERIENCE, CONNECTING NURSES, USING TECHNOLOGY

Manitoba's Nursing Peer-to-Peer Network

Experiences and knowledge – that's what Manitoba's nursing peer leaders can offer to nursing and related health care professionals across the province. Are you struggling with new technology, debating the benefits of implementing new systems or wondering how to survive another change in your workplace? Nursing peer leaders can help.

"We share the lived experience. Technology is too new within our local nursing world, and to not impart our knowledge with one another would be a travesty. For true learning to occur and for knowledge to be translated, we must share our experiences," encourages Trish Bergal, one of Manitoba's five nursing peer leader.

Not only do Manitoba's nursing peer leaders understand the challenges and the benefits of using technology in clinical setting, they understand the duties, expectations, settings and culture nurses work in. Together, these five nursing peer leaders have over 115 years of nursing experience in a wide-range of care settings.

Learn from our experience

"It's been my experience that whenever I'm trying something new, it always goes much easier if I'm able to connect with someone who has been through it before. Others can learn from our experiences," said Norm Vigier, another one of Manitoba's nursing peer leaders.

Manitoba's nursing peer leaders, which also include Barbara Cranston, Gwendolyne Nyhof and Myrna Pachal, work in areas across the province. They have worked in a variety of public and private nursing settings, including emergency, acute and long-term care and administration.

Peer leaders use their experiences to respond to questions about planning, implementation, change management and achieving maximum benefits from technology. They can arrange demonstrations and site visits, offer advice, make recommendations and provide strategies and support to nurses, nurse managers, their staff and other health-care providers during all stages of the adoption process.

An electronic information highway

"In health care, sharing information is vital to ensuring we're providing the best care possible," said Norm. Technology can provide faster, more efficient access to information and allow for more collaborative sharing of information between nursing staff and other health-care providers.

"One of the biggest frustrations for front-line nurses is the lack of timely access to pertinent client information," explained Norm. "The time will come in Manitoba when a nurse or any other health-care provider will have everything they need to know about their client right at their fingertips."

"Electronic information will allow the patient's story to be told simultaneously to many health-care providers," added Trish. "Nurses have an integral role as both the recipient and conveyor of each patient's unique journey, shared via an electronic information highway."

Shared optimism

In her 26 years in the nursing profession, Trish has seen first hand how technology has improved the nursing profession. Now working with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority as the director of utilization, Trish continues to be optimistic about the benefits new technology offers the nursing community and the patients they serve.

"Today's technology brings the opportunity to provide documentation and information that is truly patient centered and crosses the care continuum," enthused Trish. "These tools are powerful enough to enable health-care providers to enhance their practice interface with health providers and directly with the patients we serve."

Focusing on the benefits

Norm shares this enthusiasm in his professional practice. He recently oversaw the transition, implementation and adoption of an electronic medical record (EMR) system in the facilities he manages in the South Eastman Health/Santé Sud-Eas Inc. region. The transition involved managing change for four physicians, a nurse practitioner, nursing staff from acute and community care and clinical support staff.

"Having a good understanding of an application is key to maximizing the potential benefits," advised Norm. "Once staff has become familiar with the system, they will have timely access to client information."

Peer leaders offer a direct line to nurses and nurse managers, providing the opportunity to hear from their colleagues the benefits and opportunities available from new information technology.

A network of support

"Please don't try to re-invent the wheel," added Norm. "If you are planning, implementing or adopting anything having to do with information technology, give the peer leader network a call. Chances are we'll be able to connect you with someone who has already lived the experience."

"I became a peer leader because I am excited to see the many opportunities that are emerging, which bring together clinical practice and information technology with the goal of improving patient care," explained Trish.

The implications of new technology in the practice setting are exciting and the changes they will bring are immense, commented Trish. "A network of nursing peer leaders can challenge us all to approach new projects and initiatives with enthusiasm, building on the experience of other colleagues."

Contact a nursing peer leader

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