

MANITOBA NURSING PEER-TO-PEER NETWORK

Learn from over 115 years of nursing experience

"As nurses, we have all dealt with patients who don't know the details of their medical history. We have all heard a patient say, for example, 'I take a little white pill for my blood pressure.' Having the complete clinical picture is paramount to providing safe, effective care. Technology can provide this consistency, accuracy and quality of care," explained Gwendolyne Nyhof, Manitoba nursing peer leader.

Gwendolyne is a peer leader with the Manitoba Nursing Peer-to-Peer Network and a registered nurse with 20 years of nursing experience in a variety of settings including critical, acute and long-term care, clinical instruction, clinical management and project management. She is one of five nursing peer leaders in the Manitoba network, each willing to share their unique experience with health-care technology with their peers.

Nurses, nurse leaders, their teams and other health-care providers can connect with peer leaders to seek advice and support about introducing and using electronic information systems in their practice settings.

"The network provides an organized structure and the opportunity to have nurse professionals share their expertise with others," said project leader Patricia Rothney. "Because of their frontline experience in various nursing positions and projects, these nursing peer leaders truly understand what their peers experience when transitioning to a new information system."

Experience with change

Together, the five peer leaders have over 115 years experience in the nursing profession in various public and private health-care settings across Manitoba, including emergency, acute and long-term care and administration.

Peer leaders have implemented and worked with new information technology systems in the practice setting. They have learned many lessons, seen the benefits, and proposed and led changes to improve care and promote better outcomes for health-care delivery.

"There have been a lot of changes," explained Myrna Pachal. "We had to start with the basics of introducing nursing staff to the equipment – computers, keyboards, monitors – to computer applications and to the benefits for nurses and clinical staff of entering data and being able to retrieve patient information when and where they need it."

Meet Manitoba's peer leaders

Each peer leader brings a unique skill set and perspective to the network.

Myrna has worked as a nursing professional in Brandon, Manitoba for the past 30 years. She is experienced in long-term and palliative care, day surgery, the GI unit and orthopaedic surgery and worked as a program educator for long-term care and surgical areas. Today, she works as a clinical applications facilitator in electronic health records.

"I felt it was important for someone outside of Winnipeg to demonstrate that the rollout of information technology and the electronic health records system is not just a Winnipeg initiative," described Myrna. "There is an important role for technology in making available the right patient information to the right people at the right time."

Now working as the program manager of MBTelehealth, Gwendolyne understands how this new technology system can benefit patients, their families and the nursing profession.

"It's always rewarding to see people who may be hesitant with a new technology, to see them a few months later having embraced it, see the benefits and have become champions of it," explained Gwendolyne. "Technology provides the opportunity to raise the quality of care provided. It allows us, as nursing professionals, to reduce errors and improve the sharing of patient information."

Barb Cranston became a nursing peer leader to share the knowledge she has gathered from a diverse 30-year nursing career, which took her across North America.

"Being a peer leader allows me to make a difference and support my colleagues in the things I have experience in," said Barb. "I can provide my street smarts experience to those who haven't been 'down the road' before. I understand where you are standing and can help you get where you are going with minimal pain and suffering."

Barb is devoted to health-care initiatives relating to continuous quality improvement and the use of clinical information systems. She has developed and implemented several electronic clinical applications in Canada and the United States.

"Clinical information systems make health care safer," Barb explained. "They reduce risks for nurses and patients by improving processes, eliminating illegibility of handwriting and documentation, double documenting and they can produce effective outcomes that can be analysed to enhance patient care delivery."

Manitoba's other peer leaders, Norm Vigier and Trish Bergal, offer their own expertise and experience to the Manitoba Nursing Peer-to-Peer Network.

Norm has held various nursing and management roles in the South Eastman Health Region for the last 14 years, with a background in primary care and experience in services to aboriginal communities. He has recently led the implementation of an electronic medical record (EMR) system in the clinic he currently manages.

In her 26 years in health care, Trish has implemented and used information technology in a practice setting. She has a clinical background in acute care and administrative experience in structure, process and decision-making.

To learn more about each nursing peer leader, visit:
www.manitoba-ehealth.ca/ManitobaNursingPeerLeaders.html.

Peer Leader Service

From Myrna's experience, teamwork is the key to success. Implementing new clinical systems cannot be accomplished without a network of supportive individuals and peer leaders can be an important part of your support team.

Nursing peer leaders use their own experiences and knowledge to:

- Respond to questions about the best use of technology in a practical setting.
- Arrange demonstrations and visits to sites where technology systems are used successfully.
- Offer advice on common and unique barriers for health-care technology solutions.
- Make recommendations to help ease transitions during the implementation and workflow change process.
- Provide strategies and support for an individual or a group throughout the process.
- Share information on national, provincial and regional eHealth strategies and initiatives.

“We have to embrace technology, we cannot live without it,” explained Barb. “The public is knowledgeable and expects it, all eyes are on it and the dollars are there to support it. Finally health care is catching up with what technology can provide and deliver with seamless ease.”

Contact a peer leader

“It never hurts to ask questions and get more information,” added Gwendolyne. “Asking doesn’t mean you have to commit. Having the information allows you to make a more informed decision and the best decision for your program. Ultimately, the patient is the winner through improved sharing of health information, and that’s why we are all working in health care – for the patient!”

To arrange a consultation with a peer leader, email:

nsgpeertopeer@manitoba-ehealth.ca.

To learn more about the Manitoba Nursing Peer-to-Peer Network, visit:

www.manitoba-ehealth.ca/NsgP2P.html.