

Educating the Future E-Health Professional Nurse

By: Richard G. Booth, RN, BScN, MScN(student)

The University of Western Ontario

Nursing is at the cusp of a truly revolutionary time in its history with the emergence of various E-Health technologies to support client care. Technology itself will not transform healthcare without skilled practitioners educated and comfortable with E-Health technologies. Therefore, it is imperative that discussion of E-Health education occur in nursing and all other related health care disciplines. This proactive stance will be necessary for E-Health to be utilized to its maximum to support nurses in providing high quality care, rather than an imposed tool that drives health care delivery.

Nursing education programs have yet to conquer the larger issues surrounding the necessary knowledge, skills, and practice competencies required for nurses to function in the future as E-Health practitioners. To educate the future E-Health professional, current visions, priorities, and attitudes concerning E-Health must be explored. Specifically, undergraduate nursing education must take a proactive stance towards curriculum development in the areas of E-Health. Collaboration between health care institutions, government, private sector corporations and educational institutions are all necessary components to ensure that applicability and longevity is built into curriculum redevelopment which incorporates a focus on E-Health.

The purpose of this paper is to propose best practices to educate students within this new E-Health paradigm of health care. Suggestions include placing a greater emphasis on the integration of technology in nursing curricula and ensuring students have adequate access to various forms of learning technology. Equally, more focus should be placed upon teaching the principles and goals of E-Health to provide the necessary awareness and knowledge for students to function effectively in a dynamic, technologically infused health care system.