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Creating the future of nursing in the post-pandemic world

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that nursing cannot go back to its old way of providing care. Care is central to what nurses do and the profession itself, and now is the time for nursing to innovate and reimagine what nursing will look like in the future. From new models of care to technology, nursing has an endless opportunity to innovate the profession. The new model of nursing care must be sustainable and work to maximize nurses while leveraging technology as a tool to help improve quality outcomes. The opportunities are endless, and the time is now to innovate and reimagine nursing and its caring core.

Keywords

COVID-19; nursing; caring; future; innovation; creating

Editorial

The central core aspect of nursing is caring. Nursing caring has evolved over time, there have been many iterations of nursing throughout nursing's long history of caring. Nursing as we know it has fundamentally changed. We cannot go back to the way that nursing was in the past, prior to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Nursing tirelessly fought COVID-19 and has provided excellent care to patients and the globally community as COVID-19 has waxed and waned. Even now, the future remains unclear as COVID-19 continues to daily disrupt our lives. Through this process, nurses have maintained a steadfast presence of caring and compassion (Marzilli, 2021). This has not come without a cost to nurses and the profession. Globally, nursing is charged with providing care for others, and the profession of nursing accepts this responsibility, duty, and calling. However, the cost of care is high, and nurses feel a collective heavy burden and stress as they put their patients and communities first. This duty to provide care to their patients and communities while providing care and support to their families means that nurses often put their own well-being last. The events of the COVID-19 pandemic have led to a crisis in the profession. Nurses cannot care for patients if they are not taking care of their own well-being to manage their stress burden in a healthy and efficacious manner. The crisis in the nursing profession has led to many nurses resigning. Nursing has not been spared from the Great Resignation (Jiskrova, 2022). Healthcare facilities are short-staffed, and nurses are overworked and over-burdened. Strategies like mandatory overtime and doing more with less are commonplace. It is very clear that nurses are operating in a manner that is not sustainable.

The profession of nursing has tried to provide care to their own. The idea of e-caring leadership and the opportunity to provide virtual caring has provided tremendous support to nurses that are tired and short-staffed (Gunawan et al., 2022).

Technology has played a significant role in how nursing is mitigating increased patient demands to maximize the existing nursing staff. Technology is an asset, especially when the opportunities for technology integration are imagined for the future. The pandemic highlighted the way that nurses can use telehealth, telemedicine, and telenursing (Gunawan et al., 2022). The profession of nursing is left to consider the benefit and opportunity of technology integration and e-caring leadership. Since nursing as we know it is gone, how will the profession of nursing design the future of nursing and patient care?

When we consider the future of nursing, we know that we cannot stay with the same model of over-worked and short-staffed nurses. The profession of nursing knows this is not sustainable. The future of nursing requires safe-staffing where patients have the best opportunity for quality care so now is the time for nursing to envision the future. Should nursing adopt the old model of team nursing or require mandated nurse to patient ratios? Are there opportunities for nursing schools around the world to have a nursing program that is free to those interested in being a nurse? Should nursing students be leveraged as unlicensed staff to provide assistance to nurses in a model that enables learning through hands-on experience embedded in a hospital training program? This was used heavily in the United States for many decades but has fallen out of favor, but the profession of nursing continues to use this model of training in different parts of the world. Should this be a global standard?

Should nursing partner with engineering and accelerate the development of robots to provide support for patient care in all patient care settings from the home to the intensive care unit? What does the profession of nursing envision for robots in healthcare? Are these robots therapeutic pets that will calm patients and decrease blood pressure and symptoms of dementia including agitation and anxiety (Petersen et al., 2017)? Will these robots providing lifting support to save

nurses from lifting injuries (Kato et al., 2022)? Will technology be widely integrated into patient care like smart intravenous (IV) pumps to increase quality of nursing care and reduce patient errors (Wen et al., 2022)?

The profession of nursing knows that it cannot go back to the pre-COVID-19 period. The old ways of nursing are gone, and it is time to invent the future of nursing. Innovation requires creativity, leadership, optimism, foresight, and planning. Innovation often happens from necessity, and nurses are great innovators identifying problems and creating solutions to provide the care their patients need. Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, the donning and doffing of personal protective equipment (PPE) represents a significant amount of time, and when IV pumps would beep, the nurse would don the appropriate PPE to attend to the IV pump, and then the nurse would doff the PPE per protocol. Out of necessity nurses identified an opportunity for innovation by connecting several sets of IV tubing so the IV pump could be left in the hallway (Giuliano & Landsman, 2022). Nurses are innovative and creative, and now is the time to leverage our creativity and innovative spirit to envision the future of nursing.

Often, when nursing envisions innovation and creativity, the focus is on high-tech and high-cost tools to improve health and healthcare. However, nurses have a keen understanding and awareness of the cost of healthcare and the environmental impact of healthcare. As nursing creates the future of nursing, it is essential to remember that innovation and creativity for the future do not need to be high-tech or technology rich. The Sustainable Development Goals from the United Nations charge all of us to be aware of the environmental impact of our actions while considering climate and the environment on land and in the sea as we work to promote health for all in a sustainable and responsible manner (Scanlon et al., 2022). It is essential that nursing consider the role of technology in the future of nursing not as the be-all of what nursing will look like in the future. The nursing profession must consider how nurses will leverage technology as a tool to enhance care in a sustainable manner that promotes equitable care for quality outcomes. In this manner, nursing embraces technology and its role in the future, but technology does not become the central focus of nursing. Nursing innovations and the future of nursing can have non technology-based innovations and models that maximize the nursing workforce.

The time to reinvent and reimagine nursing is now. As we reflect on where nursing has been, what it became during the pandemic, and where we want nursing to go in the future, caring must always be present. Nursing must strategically envision new models of nursing care and new technologies that can help maximize the nursing workforce. Nurses must be bold and take ownership of this transformative process, so nurses are the architects of the future of nursing. The time is now. Nursing cannot go backwards. Nursing can only go

forwards and continue to provide care in the best manner possible while providing care to those that are serving in the profession of nursing.

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CM made a substantial contribution from the conception, finalization, and writing of the final version of this article.

Author's Biography

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Not applicable.

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