Nurse-Technology vs. Nurse-Patient Relationship: Implications for Education, Practice and Nursing’s Future

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Objectives
1. Describe the history of technology application in nursing.
2. Describe methods for future technology integration into practice.

Underlying Myths Regarding Technology Expansion
Technology reduces risk of missing a problem, decision regret, uncertainty & litigation

Patient outcomes are a function of nursing's relationship with technology AND the patient

The Nurse-Patient Relationship is Eroding

• Intimate body care & sacred therapeutic relationships are increasingly being replaced with technical intimacy.

The increasing mechanistic view that human beings are predictable & manageable

• Increasing emphasis on technology is changing nursing’s paradigm from holism to a biomedical model.

• The promise that the technology permits the nurse to care for more patients is fantasy.

• Technology increases the need for more nurses related to maintenance, programming, troubleshooting, & alarms.

• The most dangerous belief is that technology can substitute for the judgment of a nurse.

• Nurses make technology SAFE!

• Nursing lacks a leader, a focus & a champion to drive safe technology application.

Unspoken Truths of Technology Application

• Patients have been technologically rendered as “data”.

• Clinicians are increasingly physically disconnected from patients.

Nurse’s Responses to Technology Expansion in Health Care

• Nursing is unaware of the depth of impact of technology on nursing values, practice & environment of care.

• Increasing emphasis on objectivity, mechanization, efficiency which can NEVER substitute for caring.

• Intense human needs forgotten or ignored in technological rich environments.

The Nurse-Patient Relationship is Eroding

4, 6, 11, 19, 20, 21

• Intimate body care & sacred therapeutic relationships are increasingly being replaced with technical intimacy.

• Overemphasis on technological competency has gradually eroded the nurse–patient dyad to the patient–technology–nurse triad.

• Increasingly, the patient–nurse relationship occurs only if there is time left.

• Gradually, the nurse–patient relationship, which has the greatest lasting impact on the health care experience, is disappearing.

Boundaries & Outcome of Health Care Technology

Technology 3, 4, 8, 12, 13, 17, 19, 20

The increasing mechanistic view that human beings are predictable & manageable

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• The promise that the technology permits the nurse to care for more patients is fantasy.

• Technology increases the need for more nurses related to maintenance, programming, troubleshooting, & alarms.

• The most dangerous belief is that technology can substitute for the judgment of a nurse.

• Nurses make technology SAFE!

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Nursing’s Responses to Technology Expansion in Health Care 1, 2, 4, 7, 10, 16

• Nursing is unaware of the depth of impact of technology on nursing values, practice & environment of care.

• Nursing has afforded no resistance to assuming the responsibility for technology application in health care.

• Technology application requires intense education, competency assessment, & time-consuming repetitive tasks.

• Increasing emphasis on objectivity, mechanization, efficiency which can NEVER substitute for caring.

• Intense human needs forgotten or ignored in technological rich environments.

Recommendations for the Future

4, 5, 6, 15, 18, 19, 20

• Nursing must advocate direct human connections which require time, energy, effort & interaction.

• Nurses have an obligation to preserve the nurse–patient relationship during technology expansion.

• Education nurses to recognize when technology is used as an excuse to avoid caring.

• Critical evaluation of technology before & after implementation.

• Preserve nursing-patient relationship.

• Protect vulnerable patients.

• Drive safe technology application.

Patient outcomes are a function of nursing’s relationship with technology

AND the patient 10, 22

Selected References: