

Letter to the Editor

[Re: Leadership for the Information Age: The Time for Action is Now by Dorothy Pringle and Lynn Nagle 22(1).]

I read the *CJNL* co-editorial about the need for leadership for the information age – well written and to the point. The brief summary of electronic health records, HOBIC and the need for nursing information and evidence-based practice, while “spot on,” is not new. Nor is the recognition of the need for leadership by educators, clinicians and managers.

Leadership issues were identified in the national study, *Educating Tomorrow's Nurses: Where's Nursing Informatics?* (CNIA 2002). This study built on the 1998 National Nursing Informatics Project (Hebert 1999) and the earlier work of the Canadian Nurses Association – Health Information: Nursing Components (HI:NC) (CNA 1993). Each project drew the same conclusions: (1) a national strategy is needed, and (2) values, principles and expectations of leadership (educators, clinicians and managers) should be clarified with respect to nursing informatics and use of information and communication technology to support teaching and nursing care.

The 2002 study made recommendations based on a national nursing informatics strategy priority. The project's Advisory Committee (Health Canada/Office of Nursing Policy, Canadian Nurses Association, Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing, Canadian Nursing Informatics Association and Academy of Canadian Nurse Executives) identified which of their organizations would take primary responsibility for action. Recommendations specific to leadership included: (1) change the culture and expectations of schools of nursing to embrace nursing informatics, (2) appropriately use information and communication technology in education, (3) build educator capacity and (4) address education and clinical use and development of information and communication technology. The report noted: “Conclusions drawn from previous Canadian studies and their subsequent recommendations provide further impetus for taking action on the conclusions and recommendations of this study” (CNIA 2002).

What does it take to get leadership *action*? Why is it that we still have to convince nursing leaders in education and administration/management, and nursing organizations, to get on board – to *take* action? Where are our role models demonstrating best practices in leadership for the information age? While nursing has a few ambassadors (e.g., Drs. Hannah, Pringle and Nagle) and organizations (e.g., CNA and CNIA), they can't do it alone. More nursing leaders and organizations need to become informed and advocate for appropriate nursing data to be part of

health information systems and for nurses to be part of the team in design, implementation and evaluation at local, provincial, national and international levels.

The editors suggest that a national EHR Planning Committee be established and that nurse leaders should be part of that. A good idea – but perhaps we need a nurse leaders' boot camp to prepare for this, as well as other leadership roles essential to propel nursing farther and faster into the information age. We do not lack the evidence of the need for nursing information or nursing leadership – what we lack is *action* based on a well-informed, passionate and committed nursing leadership!

Thanks to the editors for keeping this critical issue of leadership for the information age on the nursing radar screen – may it resonate with our current and future nurse leaders! I look forward to reading about our nursing leadership in *action*!

Sincerely,
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References

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- Canadian Nursing Informatics Association (CNIA). 2002. *Educating Tomorrow's Nurses: Where's Nursing Informatics?* Ottawa: Health Canada – Office of Health and the Information Highway (OHIH). Retrieved April 15, 2009. <<http://www.cnia.ca/OHIHfinaltoc.htm>>.
- Hebert, M. (1999). *National Nursing Informatics Project: Discussion Paper*. Ottawa: Canadian Nurses Association.