Large-scale implementation of ICNP

Enhancing practice and supporting policy-making through national information standards for nursing practice and health care

The International Classification for Nursing Practice (ICNP), a product of the International Council of Nurses (ICN), is an agreed terminology, or dictionary of terms, that enables nurses to describe and report their practice in a systematic way. The resulting information is used to support care and effective decision-making, and to inform nursing education and health policy.

There are a number of factors that influence the decision to adopt a particular terminology such as ICNP. In Portugal, the stimulus was the recognition within the nursing profession of (a) a need for change and (b) a need for better information to support and evidence the transformation. ICNP was selected as the preferred terminology for nursing, as recommended by both the Portuguese Health Ministry and the Ordem dos Enfermeiros (the Portuguese national nurses' association).

ICNP has been widely implemented in electronic health record systems throughout Portugal over several decades. Nurses across Portugal use ICNP to describe and report in detail the things that they see (diagnoses or outcomes, e.g. nausea) and the things that they do (interventions, e.g. counselling).

Nurses in Portugal report a number of benefits. The use of ICNP encourages individual nurses to reflect and **make improvements to health care**. And ICNP further increases quality and safety by facilitating improved information management to support **more effective clinical decision-making**.

ICNP also supports nursing policy-makers by populating a range of indicators that **highlight the effectiveness of practice** (e.g. the prevention of an adverse event, and guides the optimal deployment of resources).

Finally, nurse researchers in Portugal are benefitting from the very large body of ICNP-encoded nursing data. For example, researchers at the ICN-accredited ICNP Center for Information Systems Research and Development at Escola Superior de Enfermagem do Porto (ESEP) are combining the nursing ICNP-encoded data with information from other sources to **evaluate care across settings and over time**. The volume of data available facilitates the selection of very large samples, thereby improving the reliability of research results. Recent research at ESEP demonstrated, through the examination of interventions that nurses actually performed in practice, the significant role that nurses play for example in promoting self-management and in ensuring adherence to treatment plans.

The use of ICNP in Portugal has resulted in benefits for individual nurses and citizens. Its widespread adoption has resulted in further benefits for the entire population, for the health sector, and for the nursing profession.

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