

Exploring the Future of Nursing in Healthcare

Sultan Mohammed Ali Al-Ghamdi¹, Abdulkhaliq Abdullah Alharthi², Talae Mohammed Albarqi³, Fahad Ali Mohammed Alzahrani⁴, Rashed Ramadan Almalki⁵, Ali Aloush Alhuzari⁶, Fatmah Mobarak Ahmed Alqhtani⁷, Ghazai Mazyad Sharyr Alruqi⁸, Samirah Ahmed Mohamed Alwadai⁹

1. Nursing, Beni Hassan phc
2. Nursing Technician, Wadi Tarj General Hospital
3. Nurse, Khamis general hospital
4. Nursing, Bni hassan phc
5. Nursing, Hospital Adam general
6. Health Assistant, Tabala Hospital
7. Health assistani -nursing, Directorate of Health Affairs in Jeddah Governorate
8. Nursing technician, Irada Mental Health Complex
9. Nursing technician, Dhahran Aljanob General Hospital

ABSTRACT

The future of nursing in healthcare is an evolving field that encompasses advancements in technology, changes in healthcare delivery systems, and the increasing demand for quality patient care. It is necessary for healthcare providers to be aware of and adjust to these changes as they occur in order to be in the best position to meet the needs of their patients. Nurses are positioned to be aware of patient changes before and during a medical crisis or disease, which makes their proactive adaptation integral to success in the healthcare delivery system. In this essay, three important areas will be discussed regarding nursing and healthcare. The first discussion will address the future needs of different populations in the . The quality of patient care that is affected by the competency and knowledge of the healthcare providers will be explored. Finally, the growth of integrative healthcare will be addressed, along with the implications this healthcare growth will have on nurses. In this essay, readers are invited to consider the implications of social, economic, and policy trends as they relate to their own nursing practice.

KEYWORDS: nursing, healthcare, patient care.

1. Introduction

The future of nursing in healthcare is an evolving field that encompasses advancements in technology, changes in healthcare delivery systems, and the increasing demand for quality patient care. It is necessary for healthcare providers to be aware of and adjust to these changes as they occur in order to be in the best position to meet the needs of their patients. Nurses are positioned to be aware of patient changes before and during a medical crisis or disease, which makes their proactive adaptation integral to success in the healthcare delivery system. In this essay, three important areas will be discussed regarding nursing and healthcare. The

first discussion will address the future needs of different populations in the . The quality of patient care that is affected by the competency and knowledge of the healthcare providers will be explored. Finally, the growth of integrative healthcare will be addressed, along with the implications this healthcare growth will have on nurses. In this essay, readers are invited to consider the implications of social, economic, and policy trends as they relate to their own nursing practice. The current healthcare delivery system is shifting, and the roles of professionals are also beginning to change right before our eyes. It is necessary for effective, interdisciplinary professional communication and cooperation to implement changes brought about by the evolving healthcare horizon. Therefore, professionals such as nurses must also be aware of the population trends in healthcare in order to be able to properly plan and communicate. In integrative healthcare, the basic focus is on prevention, patient education, and reducing the liability of illness rather than the treatment of diseases and managing conditions. Collaborative care will enhance a person's self-determination, ability to maintain health, and to make lifestyle choices that are consistent with health and well-being.

2. Current Role of Nursing in Healthcare

Nurses are vital to the provision of healthcare services. They provide direct patient care, manage care, and engage in leadership roles for patient care. In the clinical environment, they are the largest single clinical provider group. They execute a spectrum of clinical services and interventions designed to optimize function, enhance recovery, and sustain wellness, and report on and manage the effects of treatments. Nurses engaged with direct patient care function as clinicians or advanced practice nurses. With additional education and licensure, advanced practice nurses perform an expanded set of services, including direct patient care, diagnosis and management of medical conditions, and prescription of medications. (Ryan et al., 2020)(Shechter et al.2020)

Nursing requires the synthesis of knowledge, evidence, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to provide the safe, compassionate, high-quality care required. An efficient clinician knows the underlying pathophysiology of most standard disease states and the appropriate diagnostics and interventions that influence recovery, and can analyze them in the context of specific patient conditions and behaviors. The ability to adapt clinical education that is directly related to and essential for today's practice requires a level of expertise, judgment, and critical thinking that goes well beyond that required for licensure alone. Emotional intelligence, compassion, and the ability to utilize therapeutic communication techniques to engage with the patient and generate a trusting and professional relationship are typically associated skills and are often considered essential for high-quality nursing practice.

2.1. Clinical Practice

Clinical Practice. This encompasses the clinical responsibilities of a nurse as outlined in their job descriptions. In dependable clinical practice, the nurse has to perform direct patient care, which encompasses the basic activities of daily living, preparation for diagnostic tests, surgery, and also patient teaching in preparation for discharge or

self-management. Knowledge of patient care also has to include medication administration and treatments.

Medication administration involves adapting drugs to patients in nursing practice as a response to the aim of achieving the desired effects with maximal benefits and minimal unwanted side effects. Patient assessment by the nurse is needed to provide the right medication in the right way. Planning involves determining patients' goals to be achieved in accordance with the nurse's data assessment and the patient's own strengths. Implementation of the plans includes providing opportunities for patients to take the medicine and also providing an explanation of the effects, benefits, and undesirable effects of the medication. Finally, appropriate education for patients' self-medication should be provided, and the patient's understanding needs to be evaluated. Nurses involved in all of the above must show evidence of their clinical interventions, which include data, standards for nursing intervention.

2.2. Education and Training

Nurses have a variety of educational pathways that reflect their professional responsibilities and areas of practice. In the nursing profession, individuals can earn a nursing diploma, baccalaureate degree, master's degree, or doctoral degree. Some pursue advanced education that emphasizes clinical practice, while others pursue master's or doctoral preparation that emphasizes expertise beyond clinical practice, such as administration, research, or education. Continuing education is indispensable for nurses seeking to stay specialized or certified within specific areas of expertise.

Several states have introduced new requirements for advanced training through legislation and administrative rules and require those seeking advanced practice certification to obtain a master's degree. They realize the science of nursing has grown increasingly complex; advances in evaluations and accountability have been made, and the profession of nursing is being called upon to respond. Evidence has shown that professors with more education in their field of teaching are better equipped to educate students and are committed to providing a higher quality education. The role of the nurse will continue to expand, and the education system will need to adapt to ensure the future nursing workforce is ready for the changing healthcare environment. There are two major areas in which there is strong evidence that nursing, underpinned by educational reform, makes a difference in the quality of care: better patient outcomes and attainment of patient experience and staff satisfaction objectives, leading to greater retention of an experienced nursing workforce. A robust framework for nursing education is vital.

3. Challenges Faced by Nursing Profession

Several major obstacles shape the climate of the nursing profession today. One of the most significant barriers to quality care is the shortage of nurses across the United States and much of the industrialized world. Shortages can be dangerous, as inadequate staffing has been linked with high levels of frustration and anxiety among practicing nurses, which can, in turn, lead to poor patient outcomes. Technology has greatly impacted nursing and forced the need for additional lifelong education. This technology-filled environment in which nurses work has not lessened the workload.

This is important, as a separate study revealed that while nurses are concerned about patient safety when working shorthanded, they stay because of their dedication to their patients or the nursing profession, rather than for any extrinsic reason, such as salary. (van der Cingel & Brouwer, 2021)(Huston, 2021)(Roth et al.2022)(Godsey et al., 2020)

Furthermore, shortages impact healthcare delivery in ways beyond patient health. The field has been subject to financial scrutiny as a result of decreased patient satisfaction, high repeating costs, and penalties for poor quality of care. Another major problem facing nursing as the profession evolves is the growing technology and reliance by the public on these advancements and new approaches to care. With more technology comes a greater necessity to continue to learn, train, and change within the profession. The challenge is that nurses are often trained with the idea in mind that the individual is most important. How does society expect nurses to now, in a world full of electronic charts and remote healthcare, continue to focus on the care of the individual, rather than on the need to have the best, most current information for the greatest number of patients? Current and future policies need to lend themselves to helping the nursing profession adapt and change while being effective leaders at finding ways to incorporate technology with the altruistic elements of the profession. Today's workforce and economic environment is increasingly feeling the consequences of decades-old healthcare policy, practice, and reform. Hence, from healthcare leadership and medical practice to policy and legislation, all that concerns the nursing profession offers a call to action for change.

3.1. Staffing Shortages

Staffing shortages: When trying to understand the future demand in nursing, we can look at the current and growing problem of staffing shortages. Many factors lead to nursing shortages, including nursing workforce burnout, the aging workforce, replacing those nurses who are retiring, high turnover rates, and students being less interested in becoming nurses. Research shows nearly 60% of all RNs believe the nursing shortage presents a major problem in the quality of patient care. It is well agreed that when there are inadequate staffing levels, patient care and outcomes are negatively impacted. Poor staffing levels affect the support, education, and care provided to patients. Managers must focus their attention and corrective action on the system rather than the individual staff members who may or may not be developing these problems due to inadequate staffing. Some healthcare facilities have started to receive financial incentives for ensuring quality care is delivered to patients. Facilities are required to prominently display their staffing levels so that consumers are aware of the amount of care they will receive if they are patients at that facility. Financial incentives have been put into place for hospitals that submit information about adverse patient events and their root causes. Leading by example, instituting the evidence that nursing is integral to the delivery of quality care will help in the retention of those already in the career and with the recruitment of students into the profession. Within all areas of healthcare, particularly in nursing, active recruitment and retention are already being planned to meet the impending shortages. The proactive stance that many institutions are taking is sound. However, the lack of addressing the growing and overwhelming staffing shortage problem in healthcare will continue to grow, and quality patient care will suffer.

3.2. Technological Advancements

The digital age has already upended multiple industries, and the healthcare sector is no exception. Nurses will find their jobs, which demand constant adaptation, entrenched even more directly at the intersection of humanity and advanced technology. For most patients, technology affects their experiences as consumers at multiple points well before they reach their providers: calls to nurses' advice lines, online booking, and telehealth capabilities are just a few examples. More directly, nursing care delivery is already benefiting enormously from the electronic record possibilities for scheduling and care coordination. Patients who discharge direct updates in real time to electronic records will not have to retell their stories at every healthcare point of contact during the same episode.

Platform development across healthcare will have real-time health monitoring implications for outpatient caseloads and, consequently, nursing workload. Nurses working in ambulatory settings must be prepared to triage real-time data alerts that suggest a need for immediate in-person care or that represent normal variation in patients with ambulatory care-sensitive conditions. The advent of telehealth services for care delivery has the potential to transform treatment for patients who may live in areas with few healthcare resources close by or who cannot afford to miss work for a series of in-person care appointments. The challenge for nurses will be to retain an air of human compassion while delivering care at a distance. With care delivery moving ever more into the technological arena, there are several things to consider in order to ensure a smooth transition. Nurses need training that not only outlines the systems they will be using but also teaches them to be technically proficient enough to complete their work in the most efficient manner. Automating simple tasks will help to cut down on nurse burnout, a problem that has become increasingly prevalent in recent years, as well as minimize unilateral file management and make it easier to maintain accurate records. Technology on its own is not the panacea for healthcare each time, and human nurses may discard some level of technology and retain medical professional-client interactions. In case the technology becomes better than the nurse-client interaction, nurses will have to accommodate the technology, replacing the interpersonal education with the customers.

4. Future Trends in Nursing

The nursing profession is always evolving in response to changing healthcare demands. There is plenty of demand for registered and advanced practice nurses, and that is expected to continue through the next decade. More of the same is likely to propel the future of nursing from 2020.

Telemedicine offers a breakthrough method for healthcare professionals to reach patients located in any geographic region. This approach could be one of the next great opportunities for nursing. "I believe that the future of nursing is caring for patients wherever they may be and caring for patients in many different settings," says a senior adviser for nursing. "Our healthcare currently is designed in a patient-centered healthcare system. Why? Because we have to get paid by whether or not we're doing right by the patients. This movement is a reflection of a lot of different

things. Sure, some people want to be with the patients and do the right thing for them, but we're also being measured by certain quality outcomes." A few core elements of the healthcare delivery system that also care for the patient wherever they may be include coordination, communication, and a nurturing, caring touchpoint that happens mainly through technology. Virtual reality adds a human element to e-commerce with virtual care rooms and offices. Nursing—and doctors—would be the face of companies that deliver the best affordable medicines and health supplies as well as the right providers for a patient in any specialty or subspecialty niche. And it appears AI will play a large role in that future.

4.1. Telemedicine and Remote Care

Today, telemedicine and remote care are the hottest topics in both health systems and in culture more broadly. High-profile telemedicine-based companies are household names due to significant venture funding, aggressive social media and podcast advertising campaigns, and contracts with athletes and celebrities. To date, telemedicine or telepsychiatry visits in the United States constitute a small proportion of overall healthcare visits; however, more providers and patients are using the service for mental health and general wellness services.

There is no one agreed-upon definition of telemedicine in the nursing literature; however, telemedicine is defined as the remote diagnosis and treatment of patients by means of telecommunications technology. This sub-section broadly includes telemedicine, telehealth, and virtual care, and addresses not only specific legal and regulatory requirements related to conducting remote consults, but also general practice recommendations to ensure safe, effective, and ethical care delivery. Remote consultation and clinical services are commonplace for nurse clinicians and nurse scientists in both urban and rural contexts. Advances in both digital technology and communications have enabled nurse practitioners to diagnose, evaluate, and treat patients who are at a remote site from the clinician and care team. A study found that only 18 percent of patients would prefer an in-person visit with their physician, predicting that over the coming years, the majority of patients will rely on some form of virtual consult to provide healthcare. Telemedicine can significantly increase a provider's patient panel and can also provide high-quality, evidence-based care to patients located in rural or medically underserved regions. Patients may receive the same quality of care from a telemedicine consult as from an in-office consult without the travel time or separation from work or family, and can more easily fit an appointment with their provider into their schedule. In addition, telemedicine is one means of making the healthcare system more accessible to patients and caregivers in geographically isolated areas, with potential to reach international caregiver-patient dyads. Patients may receive care from specialists who would not otherwise have an opportunity for an in-person relationship. (Su et al., 2024)

For nurses, telehealth changes not only the physical way in which care is delivered, but also the location and means of the nursing encounter, communication, and therapeutic relationship. Although the basics of history-taking, decision-making, and patient engagement remain the same telemedically, the nuances to effective telehealth delivery are numerous and require a change in mindset, workflow, and new skills. Consultative clinical care is not the only facet of telehealth. Opportunities

for research, education, and policy development are also significant in nursing. In clinical care, nurse consultation opportunities are novel and expansive within and across settings. In the NCLEX test plan, nursing delegation is a key aspect of safe, effective patient care. In telehealth, nurse practitioners and nurse scientists use digital technology to communicate with other care team members and the patient, make referrals, manage care, and educate patients and families.

4.2. Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare

AI is now a key enabler in healthcare. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was tremendously helpful in terms of data mining and image analysis, and predictive tools are used to identify clusters of cases. It also took part in the fight against the spread of the virus by enabling early detection, tracking the movements of citizens, revealing trends, and simulating scenarios. It should also be taken into account that AI technology relies heavily on the collection of a wealth of health data, including blood test results. There is tremendous potential for AI technology to address some of the challenges common to nursing care, including timely, individualized clinical decision-making that can optimize care. In addition to improving patient outcomes, AI may support the ability of nurses to work within an inter-professional collaborative practice model. AI technology is being designed to enhance a variety of clinical tools and reduce the potential for clinician error.

There remain multiple facets of decision-making that are largely invisible and poorly regulated in nursing. Further research is required to explore the use of these tools in the clinical area. In the context of nursing and nurse practitioners, if the findings demonstrate that clinician use of AI technology supports optimal patient outcomes, then it will be important to ensure that nurses are prepared and trained for these new tools and that the relevant policy associated with the implementation of AI tools is properly adhered to. The possible limitations linked to the use of AI pertain, in particular, to ensuring that those who use the technologies are prepared, and that these technologies are subjected to scrutiny that is reflective of the biases and values of the communities affected by biases in the lived environment. Healthcare does not simply occur in the virtual environment, and much of the evidence that we generate and utilize may not be reflective of this ongoing and challenging human-technology interaction in both immediate and sustained ways. Hence, the further development and use of such technologies should occur in parallel with consideration of ethical implications by moral institutions. Information on the use of AI in clinical decision-making remains sensitive, and there is limited understanding about its implementation in decision-making processes. Patient and family views should be used to inform the use and implementation of different types of AI in nursing and healthcare settings. In summary, we believe that AI can serve as a powerful "colleague," enhancing nursing care that is informed by clinical, sophisticated knowledge and skill, guided by caring and compassionate values, and supported by data, critical evidence, and sound reasoning while interacting exemplarily with people affected by these technologies in healing and therapeutic ways. For the appropriation of these powerful technologies by nurses, however, there needs to be enough 'talking' about how nurses can lead the integration of technology at many levels in healthcare, and nurses need to be more visible in conducting the technology-related research that supports it.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, in order to work towards an understanding of the future of the nursing profession, several themes have been analyzed. These include the need for lifelong education; advocacy for our roles as leaders in patient care and patient care delivery; embracing, rather than fearing, technology in the healthcare landscape; pressures faced by our profession; and the resilience and adaptability nurses find themselves needing to develop that may work as a catalyst towards future innovation in our profession. It has been discovered that there is not one absolute answer to what the future of nursing holds, but unsettling themes that have both driven the profession to where it is currently and suggest new evolutions in healthcare for the future. By unifying and identifying each healthcare sector's strengths and opportunities for growth, we can open our minds and offer each other support in a time of significant change within global healthcare. The biggest takeaway this paper would impart on the reader is the departure from the notion of nurses as individual functionaries of the healthcare sector – those on the “front lines” or “back stage” in direct communication with patients – and as valuable partners in delivering high-quality care. To overcome significant threats, standouts need to be nimble and forward-thinking in dynamic healthcare environments – identifying changes, creating solutions, and executing new programs quickly and effectively. To survive is to embrace the necessary changes, to fill out the knowledge gaps, and to be entrepreneurial in healthcare practice. Our largest challenge is not nursing itself, but those holding the purse strings in care delivery and policymaking that determine our future pathways.

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