



Tipping the Scales: Targeting NI Research

Dr. Margaret Ann Kennedy
Kennedy Health Informatics Associates
kennedy.hi.assoc@tncweb.ca

This paper discusses current themes in Canadian Nursing Informatics (NI) research, and proposes suggestions for future paths of nursing research. In particular, linking research topics with the E-Nursing Strategy launched by the Canadian Nurses Association (2006) is recommended to potentiate the effect of both research and achievement of key outcomes in the E-Nursing Strategy.

A scan of nursing informatics research being conducted in Canada included the Canadian Nursing Informatics Association 2005 conference proceedings, 2007 conference program, and all issues of the Canadian Journal of Nursing Informatics, as well as selected issues of the Canadian Nurse. Naturally this is not exhaustive, however, it does give participants an impression of the diversity and depth of research activities informing practice, policy, education, and research.

The themes represented in NI research have been categorized as the following:

- Clinical and academic education
- Telehealth and clinical informatics applications
- User issues/adoption/change management
- Innovations/new products or approaches
- Outcomes

- Evaluations
- ICNP®/NMDS/Taxonomies

Due to the diversity of technological applications and issues inherent in the dynamic health informatics milieu, the Canadian Nurses Association developed a strategic vision of how the future might integrate information and communication technologies (ICT) (2006). With two working groups addressing issues related to practice and education, the CNA launched the Strategy in 2006. This landmark document identifies three strategic directions which are critical to the successful implementation of the key outcomes. Identifying *access, competencies, and participation* as strategic directions serves to create an environment where all nurses are contributors to successfully incorporating technologies in professional nursing practice.

Additionally, the Strategy identifies seven key outcomes, which include:

1. Nurses will integrate ICT into their practice to achieve good client outcomes.
2. Nurses will have the required information and knowledge to support their practice.
3. Human resources planning will be facilitated.
4. New models of nursing practice will be facilitated.
5. Nursing groups will be well connected.
6. ICT will improve the quality of nurses' work lives.
7. Canadian nurses will contribute to the global community of nursing (CNA, 2006, p. 4)

Several key areas emerge based on the themes in NI research and a review of the E-Nursing Strategy. These key areas offer significant opportunity for NI research, and as the Strategy is progressively implemented, research has the capacity to potentiate achievement of the Key Outcomes. Three key NI research priorities are 1) demonstrating the value of nursing, 2) innovation, and 3) education. These three priority areas for NI research incorporate all of the key outcomes of the Strategy, while providing a breadth of focus for researchers and research teams.

When considering what “tipping points” might be – or those factors that make the critical difference in acceptance and progression of NI research, three themes emerged. First, it is

critically important that NI research demonstrate a tangible benefit to nurses' everyday practices. That is to say that nurses want to provide excellent, timely, competent and compassionate care to clients. In order for nurses to embrace NI and NI research, this benefit must be more than theoretical – it must impact practice in some way. Second, NI research should make a difference in nurses' work lives. In this instance, an improvement might appear as improved access to information to support practice, or improved human resource planning and allocation. Lastly, NI research should substantiate the value of nursing and communicate this rigorously to nurses and to the wider community.

A multitude of challenges exist with any research. NI research is no exception. Issues such as securing appropriate funding from appropriate sources, gaining governmental/institutional support, change management issues, and challenges of assembling effective and committed research teams are all issues that require tenacity and creativity. Obstacles notwithstanding, NI research in Canada offers a rich array of topics and applications – and lights a bright path for the future.

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