

Emerging trends in nursing

RNs embrace roles beyond the bedside.

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Seun Ross

What are the current trends in nursing?

There continues to be substantial movement to community-based care; increasing numbers of RNs are in public and community health and practicing care coordination in the community. Nurses are opening businesses to help manage patients and working for Fortune 500 companies like Coca-Cola. More nurses are innovating—Johnson & Johnson has a great program, and ANA is advancing nurse-led innovation. It's also exciting to see that more nurses are stepping into the political arena.

What brought about these changes?

Community-based nursing and the tech boom began ramping up in the late 1990s and early 2000s. To counter nursing shortages, electronic intensive care units (E-ICUs) were established, mostly in rural areas, to enable out-of-state nurses to monitor patients remotely via video camera. That's when hospitals and other healthcare facilities started to look to robotics and machines for some nursing tasks, like stocking rooms and even monitoring patients.

Do you see robots doing more nursing tasks?

There's a push for more automated caregivers like robots, machines, and artificial intelligence, all of which should be viewed as assistive to nursing and not a replacement. There are robots that can lift and turn patients, which can be helpful to nurses. But these machines lack the intuition of a nurse, who, for example, can assess a clinical situation and use critical thinking to determine a course of action. Just because some tasks *can* be done by machines or robots doesn't mean they *should* be.

How is technology playing a role in healthcare outside of the hospital setting?

We're seeing significant changes in how healthcare is administered. There are pop-up clinics in malls (different from clinics within drugstores) where a patient can walk in and be seen by a nurse practitioner for a small fee. These clinics have virtually no equipment. The technology is so advanced that a scan immediately takes heart rate and rhythm and other vital signs. Also, as the patient talks to the provider, the whole conversation is transcribed into the patient's record.

Wearables like Fitbit and others have given consumers the opportunity to take better care of themselves, but these devices also benefit advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs). Consumers can monitor and send their vital signs directly to their APRN in real time (and it also gives the clinician the option to remotely monitor patients).

What are other opportunities for nurses?

For nurses who want to work in communities, I encourage public health nursing. It's a field that gives nurses several options, not just working in schools, but the opportunity to travel the United States or even the world and make a huge impact. For those who want to tap into their entrepreneurial spirit, concierge healthcare is booming. APRNs and RNs meet clients/patients wherever they are to care for them. Originally started as a service for the wealthy, now it's in rural areas as a mechanism to increase access to care.

How can nurses explore these trends?

It's a multipronged approach. Nursing schools should expand their community health education to prepare nurses for these trends and shift the focus from disease management to concentrate on partnering with patients to achieve wellness.

There's a common misconception that you must practice in a hospital before anything else, but that's not true. Follow your interests. Do lots of reading, and not just nursing publications, but include *Forbes* and *Modern Healthcare*. Get plugged into philanthropic organizations that focus on healthcare and, of course, ANA. Having diversity of thought when contemplating your nursing career is essential. ★

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Interview by Elizabeth Moore, MFA, a writer at ANA.