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Bartz, CC, Hardiker, NR and Coenen, A

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Toward a Global eHealth Observatory for Nursing

Claudia C. Bartz^a, Nicholas R. Hardiker^b, Amy Coenen^c

^a International Council of Nurses, Geneva, Switzerland

^b School of Nursing, Midwifery, Social Work & Social Sciences, University of Salford, UK

^c College of Nursing, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI, USA

Abstract

This poster summarizes a review of existing health observatories and proposes a new entity for nursing. A nursing eHealth observatory would be an authoritative and respected source of eHealth information that would support nursing decision-making and policy development and add to the body of knowledge about professional nursing and client care outcomes.

Keywords:

Observatory; eHealth; Nursing.

Introduction

eHealth is the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for health. The aim of knowing who, what, when, where, why and how of "eHealth" has resulted in the emergence of eHealth observatories. Professional observatories are essentially institutions or entities that monitor and evaluate a selected topic over time. The health community is trying to more deliberately describe and advance its eHealth universe.

A global eHealth observatory for nursing is needed. The purpose of this poster is to propose an international eHealth observatory for nursing that would consider nursing eHealth roles, projects and research that would contribute to knowledge about professional nursing and client care outcomes in eHealth environments.

Methods

The work was carried out under the auspices of the International Council of Nurses (ICN) eHealth Programme.

First, using descriptive methods, published and web-sourced materials of health-related observatories were examined for characteristics applicable to a nursing eHealth observatory.

Second, a multidisciplinary team of eHealth and policy experts was tasked by ICN to envision an eHealth observatory for nursing and provide input into the planning process. The team was given guiding principles for their work, including the ICN Strategic Plan and the eHealth Programme goals and outcomes.

Results

Four health-related observatories were examined, with attention to their purposes and scopes. These were the (a) WHO Global Observatory for eHealth, (b) University of

Victoria eHealth Observatory, (c) Women Observatory for eHealth (WeObservatory) and (d) ICN Observatory on Licensure and Registration. The observatories varied but they were clear in their aim of serving as a central hub for their selected target topic in health: global data, information and knowledge; information systems; women's health and well-being; and nursing regulation, respectively. Two more health-related observatories could be useful to an international eHealth observatory for nursing: (a) the International Care Ethics Observatory and (b) the Eastern Region Public Health Observatory.

The team was very enthusiastic about an eHealth observatory for nursing as a means to identify, disseminate and respond to trends in eHealth. An observatory would influence policy and decision-making and serve as an incubator for projects going forward. It could bring a unique nursing perspective and voice to the international eHealth community. Its key characteristics would be neutrality and objectivity. The observatory would aim to be an authoritative and respected source of recommendations and knowledge in matters related to nursing and eHealth. The observatory could identify best practices for health promotion, disease prevention and care delivery in ICT-enabled environments.

The team recommended that stakeholders include the National Nurses Associations (NNA) who are members of ICN, nurses worldwide, non-governmental organizations which are involved in eHealth or other health-related endeavors, multidisciplinary professional health organizations, educators and researchers. Other stakeholders could include citizens and communities with health care needs, legislators, health economists and commercial entities.

Conclusion

The proposed observatory would bring a strong, focused nursing perspective to the eHealth environment. Outcomes could include improved policy, practice and management of eHealth in nursing through availability of relevant, timely and high-quality evidence and information; new knowledge that would contribute significantly to nursing and health through the use of ICT; and empowerment and engagement of nurses worldwide through data-based information and evidence for practice. A strategic plan and operational processes are the next steps toward a nursing eHealth observatory.

Address for correspondence

Claudia C Bartz, cbartz@uwm.edu