A Vision of Nursing in 2018: The Role of Nurses

Stacey Campbell

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The future holds many changes for society, including shifting demographics, advancing technology, and a shortage of nurses. If nurses and the health care system do not acknowledge and prepare for these changes, the effects could be detrimental to the future of nursing and the health and well-being of society. However, these challenges also have the potential to strengthen the roles of nurses. In 2018, my vision of nursing is that nurses take this opportunity to expand their roles, and to modify them according to the new ideals that will best suit the needs of society.

The shortage of health care professionals will result in more responsibilities for nurses, as well as opportunities to broaden their scope of practice. In 2018, I envision that nurses will continue to look for ways to expand their knowledge and skills, and that there will be more opportunities for nurses to do so; for instance, the further development of the nurse practitioner program. Nurses’ roles will advance towards a greater foundation in evidence-based practice, as workplaces and nursing education will foster environments that value continuing competency. Nursing education will continue to emphasize the importance of updated skills and knowledge, and in places of employment, there will be a greater commitment to updating nurses on the latest technology and research. More nurses will become involved in conducting research themselves. Nurses will also have a role as a highly valued member of the health care team: their expertise will be sought out by other members, and nurses will collaborate with others for information and skills to complement their practice.

In 2018, nurses will play a strong political role within unions and nursing organizations, as well as within the workplace. The nursing shortage will place greater demands on the nursing workforce, and issues such as inadequate staffing and overworked staff will arise. Nurses will
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aim to make their needs heard. They will recognize their value to society and hence will communicate their right to proper work conditions: “Today every profession must speak for itself and justify its existence” (Buresh and Gordon, 2006, p. 21). The political voice of nursing will become stronger and more assertive in 2018, so the public will realize the value of nurses, and why their demands should be met.

Most importantly, nurses will find their roles changing to suit the specific needs of a changing population. One of the major changes to Saskatchewan’s population is the growing number of Aboriginals: it is estimated that the percentage of Aboriginals in Saskatchewan’s population will increase from 13.5% in 2001 to 20% in 2015 (Statistics Canada Census, 2001). In 2018, the role of nursing will expand to create a representative workforce, one in which there is a proportionate number of Aboriginal health care workers to Aboriginal clients’ needs. Additionally, nursing education will broaden its teachings on culturally competent care specific to the Aboriginal population, such as their language and spiritual needs. The roles of nurses will uphold the Canadian Nursing Association’s guidelines for culturally competent care, by valuing diversity, and adapting skills, attitudes, and knowledge to the Aboriginal culture’s traditions and values (Canadian Nurses Association, 2004). Another major issue arising from the shifting demographics is the increasing aging population, as the “baby boomer” generation ages (Sask Trends Monitor, 2004). In 2018, nurses’ roles will meet the demands of this huge proportion of patients. The nurses’ role will be one that is skilled in managing the specific needs that come with age, such as chronic conditions, heart diseases, and dementias. The role will not only focus on management of chronic conditions, but also be a role of prevention: nurses will identify trends in this sub-population and aim to prevent potential conditions or complications of existing conditions.
In a broader sense, my vision of the role of nursing in 2018 involves a shift in the approach to care. In 2018, I envision that primary prevention will be the key to most aspects of nursing practice. The role of nurses will be a proactive one, in which they expect errors and poor outcomes to occur, and so implement strategies to reduce the chances of their occurrence. In 2018, the relapse rate of hospital admissions will decrease, as nurses will focus more on solid, comprehensible discharge plans that maintain patients’ overall health, rather than solely treating immediate concerns. There will be improved follow-up care of patients when discharged from health care facilities in order to better maintain a long term plan for good health; for instance, improving rehabilitation of mental health patients into the community. As well, the theme of prevention will prevail in health care facilities, as nurses aim to take greater precautions against adverse events such as nosocomial infections and medication errors.

The nursing role will also gain more of a holistic focus: the social, emotional, spiritual, and mental aspects of health will be recognized, in addition to the physical aspect. In particular, I envision that mental health will be seen as an equal component, and will merit increased investments in finances, research, and nursing care. The nursing role will also evolve to further promote healthy lifestyles, especially to those at risk for certain conditions, such as heart disease. Nurses will also take on more of a role as a facilitator, rather than an instructor: they will provide their patients or clients with the necessary information and a foundation upon which to implement change, but will allow the patient’s individual needs and desires to guide the plan of care. The nursing role will be one that helps patients to help themselves.

It is inevitable that the role of nursing progresses in accordance with societal changes, in order to meet the needs of the patients it serves. My vision of nursing in 2018 maintains that nurses’ roles will become more complex and prominent. However, it is my hope that nurses will
not stray from their core roles of caregivers. In 2018, the nursing role will still provide patient-centered care. Regardless of the circumstances, I envision that every action of nurses will be motivated by the goal of providing the best care possible, and always with the compassion and kindness that is associated with the nursing profession.
References


