Nursing of the Future: Vision for 2018

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There can be no doubt that since the time of Florence Nightingale, acclaimed pioneer of modern day nursing, nursing as a profession has experienced significant changes. Nursing roles have changed and it is certain that this trend will continue into the future. The care that nurses provide must continue to advance, according to standards of evidence-based practice, in order to meet the health needs and demands of the current population. With this in mind, my vision of nursing for the year 2018 is a dramatic expansion of the traditional nursing role in acute care settings to include a greater emphasis on holistic health promotion within the community setting, with attention given not only to physical, but to social, political, and economic factors. Community and public health nursing already exists; hopefully this role will develop to become a key component of nursing that will be equated with traditional acute care nursing. This vision is attainable through a vigorous implementation of the primary health care model as proposed by the World Health Organization thirty years ago, when the International Conference on Primary Health Care asked that urgent action be taken in this direction on both national and international levels (World Health Organization, 1978). Leadership and action from nurses is vital. It is also important that these leadership qualities be passed on to graduate nurses and nursing students, the nursing leaders of the future, so that a continuance of effective nursing care and development of nursing roles is ensured.

Interdisciplinary collaboration across the health care spectrum is crucial for the necessary change processes to occur. However, although cooperation is required from all disciplines, nurses are in a position to operate as change agents for this end, and indeed this is necessary, as “nursing practice is the very essence of primary health care”
(International Council of Nurses, 2008, p. 7). If nurses continue to strive toward the realization of this model, universal primary health care will no longer exist simply as an ideal but rather as a reality, not only here in Canada, but worldwide. With an effective integration of primary health care into our current health care system, a more pronounced upstream approach in nursing roles will be developed. Illness prevention and health promotion in the community will become a greater focus in nursing, alongside nursing in acute care settings. Nurses will take a more active role in empowering patients and communities to live healthy lifestyles through health teaching, encouragement of community participation, health promotion and prevention of illness.

A hindrance to the development of true primary health care is the current shortage of nurses. This is certainly the situation in Saskatchewan. However, according to a recent news release, the number of RNs practicing in Saskatchewan is on the rise (Saskatchewan Registered Nurses’ Association, 2008). If this trend continues, there will be many opportunities for nurses to advance their practice in new directions and attain recognition in their areas of expertise, in both clinical and community settings. Already, continuing competency and education programs for RNs help nurses keep their practice current and accountable. These initiatives will also facilitate advancement of nursing roles as clinical nurse specialists. In addition to a greater number of RNs in the province, the number of licensed nurse practitioners in Saskatchewan (and all of Canada) has been significantly increasing in the last few years (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2006). This is a remarkable development in the history of nursing roles and a positive move toward the realization of primary health care.
The College of Nursing of the University of Saskatchewan upholds a philosophy which demonstrates its commitment to the practice of primary health care and the enhancement of nursing roles:

The faculty believes in the value of human life, the inherent worth of the individual and the attainment of a high standard of health as the inherent right of every individual.

The faculty believes that nursing is a process which recognizes these values and assists individuals to move toward a higher standard of health. Nursing is a division of the health science profession and is unique in its method of synthesizing knowledge from the humanities and sciences in providing services that promote health and give comfort to people (College of Nursing, University of Saskatchewan).

This guiding philosophy and ideal of health attainment for individuals is congruent with the philosophies of the primary health care model and as such, will have a positive influence on the development of nursing roles, especially as it affects nursing students—nurses of the future.

It is anticipated that nurses will continue to take initiative in their current roles and lead health care to an effective model of primary health care. In this manner, nursing roles will become more fully developed in community settings. There will be a greater emphasis on disease prevention and health promotion in the community, rather than merely restorative care in acute care facilities. To
build healthy communities and attain holistic health, it is necessary to begin at this level, and nursing has the capacity to meet this need. Nurses can create change. With this in mind, the future of nursing as a profession is very promising and exciting for all involved. Hopefully the values and philosophy of College of Nursing will continue to shine forth as nursing students today are preparing to become leaders of nursing in the future.
References


