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Title:

Technology That Altered the Nursing Industry

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Summary:

No workplace has escaped the touch of technology, including nursing. Nursing is still, and will always be, a field where technology has had a huge impact on the way that nurses do their job.

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Article Body:

No workplace has escaped the touch of technology, including nursing. Nursing is still, and will always be, a field where technology has had a huge impact on the way that nurses do their job. While some of the technological advances have made the nurse�s job easier, others have been implemented as a price saving measure, and still others are used to improve patient safety.

Like those in other industries, nurses are often reluctant of using new technologies. With the desire to remain within the process they are familiar with, nurses are often unwillingly pulled into newer technologies. Like most others, once they become familiar with new technology, they grow to like it. One side effect of the new technological advancements in healthcare is the increase in jobs related to the field. Before ultrasounds, there was no need for someone trained to perform them. Respiratory therapy, nuclear medicine and many other branches of healthcare have created new jobs by the advancement of technology.

<b>Improvements in medical care</b>

Advancements in technology have lead to improved healthcare and patient care. Before the development of electronic IV monitors and IV pump infusions, anyone who received an IV had it administered under the watchful eye of a nurse. Because manual IVs were susceptible to stopping or flowing too rapidly, a nurse remained by the patient's side every time they received an IV. When you consider how common IVs are, it is easy to see how much time is saved with the electronic IV monitor.

All nurses are familiar with the sphygmomanometer. This is the technical name for a blood pressure cuff. Having an electronic blood pressure cuff that also records the patient's heart beat is probably one of the greatest time saving tools that technology has brought to nursing.

Technologies such as ultrasound and sonograms have given the medical community the ability to look inside of the human body and see unborn babies and cancerous tumors. While a nurse does not perform or read the ultrasounds and sonograms, their effect has touched the nursing community by allowing more invasive diagnostic procedures to fall by the wayside.

<b>Improvements in information management</b>

As important as nursing care is for the patient, it is only one part of the nurse's job. The nurse is responsible for maintaining an accurate record on each patient under her care. While many hospitals continue to use pen and paper charting, technology can make the record keeping process less cumbersome. There are computerized programs available for medication dispensing, hospital occupancy and insurance and payment programs. Patient records can be maintained in a computerized database which allows the physician, nurse or other medical professional to pull up the patient's medical history in seconds. Portable computing equipment allows the nurse to update the information on the fly, rather than at the end of each shift. Internet access allows medical personnel to have instant access to databases to search for symptoms and drug interactions.

<b>Reducing the risk of mistakes</b>

Computerized drug management software reduces the chances of a patient receiving the wrong drug, or being given two drugs that should not be given together. Portable defibrillators only work when they are needed and properly applied. Many of the improvements in technology are aimed at reducing the risk of errors and mistakes that can lead to injury or death. This not only makes the hospital a safer place for patients, but helps ease the stress nurses and other medical professionals are under.

<b>Technology and the nurse</b>

As the nursing field becomes more specialized, the need for nurses that are comfortable with new technology will only increase. While many of the therapies for disease involve drugs, a growing number include medical devices. Technology is focused on the healthcare industry right now for a variety of reasons. Recent drug interactions of approved drugs have made more healthcare development firms look at device development as a safer and less litigious area of development.

The growing needs for medical care and the shortage of healthcare workers also drive the development of new technology. Innovations that make it possible for a nurse to perform duties more efficiently, or allow them to hand over duties to an aide or administrative personnel increases efficiency and increase the number of patients that can be cared for with the same number of nurses.

The desire to reduce mistakes that can cause harm to the patient also drive the development of technology. Devices that have built in safeguards that prevent misuse are one example of this technology. In many highly computerized hospitals, a patient cannot be dispensed the improper medicine, because the computer checks current medications the patient is currently taking, and the patient's diagnosis, before allowing the medication to be removed from the pharmacy. If the doctor wants the medicine, he must manually override the system.

While nothing can totally remove the pressure of working as a nurse, many innovative solutions have made the job much more manageable. While the learning curve is often steep, the savings in time and worry are your compensation.