

Five of the Latest Developments in the World of Nursing

Nurses work at a fast pace and in an environment to which they must often adapt at the drop of a hat. It can certainly be stressful on the day-to-day level but also exciting, as over time new innovations, discoveries and inventions bring something different to the table. The past decade or so in particular has seen rapid and widespread development in all aspects of nursing, and it's worth taking a look at.

5. Packaging Design

Packaging development engineers face a unique task: synthesizing the needs of nurses, surgeons and other medical practitioners with environmental and global awareness. Nowadays, many packaging device firms work closely with nurses to create products that open easily, perform better and also create less non-biodegradable waste. They attend conferences to distribute surveys, get feedback from cadaver lab sessions and surgeries, and some firms even keep registered nurses on-staff for clinical hotlines and hands-on product testing. The first point, these companies are quick to reassure, is to provide packaging that does its job; but keeping nurses and other medical professionals at-hand also ensures that innovations help the products go above and beyond, by making the day-to-day grind *easier*.

4. Nurse Consultants

In 1999 British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced a new, necessary role in nursing: that of nurse consultant. It was designed to give nurses a greater leading role in the medical profession, with the idea that nurses taking up this career would spend 50 percent of their time working with

patients and the other 50 percent being involved with furthering research, evaluation, education, training and development in the nursing field. Nurses interested in the position would require a high level of education, something along the lines of an RN to MSN – Resident Nurse to Master of Science Nursing degree – an MPH (Master of Public Health) or something closely related to the health field as a graduate degree.

3. Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL)

This recent career development in the nursing world is a lot like the British conception of the nurse consultant, but the focus is primarily on nurses as administrators. A CNL is another highly-skilled, highly educated nurse with a firm grounding in experience, a graduate level degree in nursing (whether as part of an on-campus program or an online masters of nursing, for example) or public health. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) the CNL role was first developed in 2003 and is meant to prepare nurses for a career which “designs, implements and evaluates client care by coordinating, delegating and supervising the care provided by the health care team, including licensed nurses, technicians and other health professionals.” The position is managerial and supervisory, as well as analytical. CNLs must bring observation, interview and assessment skills to the table as well.

According the AACN, the position has received mixed reviews. Some find the CNLs to be incredibly useful and resourceful, collaborative workers who are reliable, knowledgeable and blend seamlessly into hospital programs. Critics cite the overlapping roles between CNLs and clinical nurse specialists (CNS) and the confusion that may lead to. Yet what is clear is that the CNL role empowers nurses and inspires them to be leaders in their profession.

2. Telemedicine

Telemedicine or telehealth, which in its most simple state would involve a patient and a nurse discussing health over the phone, has gained a foothold in the medical field. It's more popular than ever before, thanks in part to the rapid development of technology which allows nurses to faithfully monitor for congestive heart failure, diabetes, COPD and hypertension among other problems, by keeping a close watch on vital signs – all remotely, thanks to in-home devices which send the data to hospitals. But it's a balancing act of which nurses are acutely aware; no technology is completely reliable and the limitations of the in-home devices must be addressed.

1. Apps

That's short for applications, the wildly popular features on smart phones, which have brought us Words with Friends and Angry Birds. Nurses today have an assortment of apps available and pertinent to their profession, some better than others but all aimed at organizing stressful hospital shifts. EpocratesRx, MedCalc and the Bishop's Score Calculator all calculate medical formulas with ease and provide lightning-fast information at the tap of a key (and come highly recommended by nurses).