



Position Paper: Nursing Informatics Executive Leader

Technology is revolutionizing the manner in which health care is delivered. Clinicians and consumers are incorporating high-speed data networks, wireless solutions, handheld devices, automated exchanges between organizations/clinicians and patients and various forms of social media into their daily interactions. Adapting to these new environments requires a shift in expectations for how care is delivered and communicated. This shift necessitates a greater understanding of the constant evolution of new solutions into practice. Nurses are at the core of these changes and are the care providers with the greatest amount of direct patient contact; therefore the nursing informatics leadership roles provide a significant backdrop towards achieving organizational informatics goals and priorities.

ANA defines nursing informatics as “a specialty that integrates nursing science, computer science, and information science to manage and communicate data, information, knowledge, and wisdom in nursing practice.” (ANA, 2008). Nurses have become key participants in developing the infrastructure for health care information technology. Nursing informatics performs a critical role in advocating for patients and nurses who are often the key stakeholders and recipients of many of these technologically based solutions. Nursing informatics professionals are key liaisons to successful interactions between practice, technology, and patients. These NI practitioners focus on transforming information into knowledge and solutions which provide meaningful integration into the delivery of patient care. Technology will continue to be a fundamental enabler to the future care delivery models and nursing informatics leaders will be essential to transforming practice through technology (HIMSS Position Statement, 2011).

NI Leadership

Nursing is a key factor to successfully achieving improved outcomes, optimal wellness and overall population health management. Because of the breadth and depth of nursing engagement in all aspects of health care, nurse leaders are in a key position to influence health care reform and the multidimensional needs across all care settings. As a result a new type of nurse leader role is emerging titled the “Nursing Informatics Executive”. One can expect a growing demand for this strategic and operational role to permeate the majority organizations to support the entire care delivery team to changes in the health care environment. The NI Executive leader represents the bridge between clinical practice and informatics that transforms patient care delivery for the entire organization. The impact of technology extends beyond patient care delivery and clinician workflow to include the operations of the health system that ultimately reflects performance in quality, safety and financial measures. Emerging nursing informatics leadership roles engage in the necessary transformation activities and bridge the new care delivery models into clinical practice with the right technology solutions for organizational transformations.

Evolution of the role of the Nursing Informatics Executive leader role today and tomorrow

The inception of the Nursing Informatics Executive (NI Executive) role began with an increasing attention and focus on health care safety and quality reform and technology enablement introduced over the past 10 years. The evolution of the Nursing Informatics Executive parallels the changing health care environment as it moves from a volume-based, fee-for-service model to a data-driven, value-based model. This extraordinary shift in the health care paradigm requires a changing view of the Electronic

Health Record as an electronic documentation system to the bearer of an increasingly critical asset, clinical data. NI Executive leaders understand the design of information systems needed to capture relevant clinical data in a timely manner in order to support clinical decision making, communication and hand-offs, and reporting. It is the NI Executive leader who has the vision, knowledge and skills to leverage technology integration for clinicians to improve patient outcomes, and for the C-suite to better position their organizations in a dramatically different competitive environment.

Education & Credentialing

As the field of informatics continues to rapidly evolve, so do the skills and knowledge required for the NI Executive leader. Graduate programs at both Masters and Doctorate levels continue to grow providing education, certification and/or credentialing to expand the knowledge, skills and vision required for the NI Executive leader of today and tomorrow. AONE suggests that Nursing Informatics Executive leadership roles are best served by individuals with a Master's degree and recognize an upward trend toward doctorate education.

Governance & Reporting Structures

The landmark Institute of Medicine report from 2010 *The Future of Nursing Leading Change, Advancing Health Technology* emphasizes the importance of the vital role nurses perform with implementing transformations in health care. The challenge is to adopt technologies well with the resultant outcome focusing on the patient's health care experience and communication of meaningful information to the patient, other health care institutions, governmental, and accrediting agencies. In order to achieve these ends a NI Executive leader provides global institutional leadership and partnerships beyond the nursing domain. These partnerships ensure there are strategic alliances focusing on integrating clinical practice with safety, quality, reporting, and meaningful use requirements. The NI Executive leader must collaborate with other strategic leaders to present a unified message and direction for these innovation outlays. These strategic partnerships emphasize a unified message and direction for the innovation outlay and focus on the resultant safety, quality, and cost efficiency brought about through a well developed roadmap for proper timing of implementations and enhancement activities.

Depending on organizational structures and needs there is not one structure and reporting mechanism to fit all institutional requirements for this nurse informatics executive, however, it is recommend that the NI leader have a direct reporting relationship to a member of the Executive team e.g. CNO, CIO of the organization. **If a direct reporting relationship exists outside of nursing a matrix relationship to the CNO should be formulated for clinical transformation.** An essential ingredient is the inclusion at the leadership table providing budgeting, oversight and strategic guidance to support not only nursing practice, "but the entire care delivery team in anticipating and adapting to changes in the health care environment bridging new care delivery models into clinical practice with the right technology solution" (HIMSS Position Statement, 2011).

Summary

Health care Information Technology provides the means to the ends for safety, quality, and efficiency today and into tomorrow this focus will continue to expand. There will be continued workflow redesigns as innovations abound and health care is heralded to increase outcomes based practice and research. It is anticipated there will be more extensive requirements for both local and global sharing across organizations, more information sharing with consumers themselves, and transparency of organizational scorecards as compared to national benchmarks. This means tackling difficult issues such as interoperability and portability of electronic records for an institution(s) but regions also. Nursing

Informatics Executive leaders will provide the guidance to organizations that will bridge practice, education, and research which will foster leveraging of data and evidence for improving clinical practice, patient outcomes and population health.

References

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HIMSS Position Statement (2011) *Transforming Nursing Practice through Technology & Informatics*.

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