

CONFERENCE REPORT

15th National Nurse Education Conference 2014: Changing Boards
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The 15th National Nurse Education Conference 2014 was held at the Adelaide Convention Centre, North Terrace in Adelaide, South Australia from 30 April 2014 to 2 May 2014. The conference was hosted by the Australian Nurse Teachers Society (ANTS), Southern Australia branch.

The vision of ANTS is to work together for the future of nursing education. The aim of the conference was to deliver learning messages and ‘changing boards’ from the original blackboards to white and now virtual boards, while taking into consideration the needs and challenges of nurse educators.

One of the questions posed as the central focus of the conference was: ‘Who we were, who we are and who we want to be in the future?’ The conference theme of ‘changing boards’ reflects the significant impact technology has had on the content and delivery of education for nursing professionals. Notably, within a generation of clinical practice we have moved from using blackboards to whiteboards and now virtual boards in presenting skills and knowledge to health-care professionals across all stages and levels within their careers.

The three-day conference was an opportunity to reconnect with fellow nurse educators in clinical practice and educational institutions, from across Australia and from other countries. The conference delegates were from several universities and hospitals across the world. They were welcomed to Australia by Professor Lydia Dennet – Adjunct Associate Professor of Victoria University, Melbourne – who addressed them about the future of nursing as a profession. The objective was to highlight the current and future trends in health-care education and the role of technology to enhance and innovate the needs and challenges of nurse educators. Professor Lydia Dennet was the first keynote speaker and her presentation and welcome highlighted effective patient-focussed care through a range of support services as being of importance to the nursing profession. Most importantly, the right care should be practiced at the right time and in right place in the clinical and learning environments.

The conference opening included a presentation by the second keynote speaker, Nicole Swaine (née Graham) whose address on ‘Learning through change for peak performance – “Your culture is your difference”’, resonated with the conference theme and emphasised how technology plays a big part in the future of nursing. The two keynote addresses focused on the importance of evidenced-based research in clinical practice, commitment to train excellent staff, commitment to respect all cultures and taking into account the unique personalities about employment, work and organisation.

The three-day programme focussed on best practice in health in the belief that a multidisciplinary approach to patient care is now integral to how we as professionals work and study in a modern health system. Old public health problems continue to exist and new ones emerge. Health professionals have to make a difference in the lives of individuals by making a difference in the care they provide. Mandatory skills policies should be in place since accreditation of a qualification is a very complex, critical and time-consuming activity nowadays. The conference was divided into plenary sessions and concurrent sessions for the three days. In plenary sessions the invited speakers addressed the following topics on different days: Ongoing development of nursing education since the 1980s; Barefoot with a Band-Aid; Just Google it: the value of a clinical library service; Nursing’s contribution to patient-centred care: never mind the rhetoric, look at the reality; What is on the horizon for nursing education? Are we ready for the possibilities?; Leadership – be a step ahead; and WoundsWest: education development in wound management – from concept to interaction. Different themes were also presented in the concurrent sessions.

The issue of being autonomous in everything we do was highlighted and included knowing the similarities and differences between teaching methods, expecting the unexpected, challenges and opportunities, strengths and weaknesses and the cycle for resource capacity building. With regard to e-learning, the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) was mentioned in relation to the impact of technological advances on teaching and learning. Negative aspects of e-learning include, among other things, anxiety using computers, lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills, unreliable computer skills and links between ICT and the workforce not being made. Positive aspects include mobile ICT as ubiquitous, flexible, self-paced and timely; working online allows students to get to know each other and deepen their concentration.

In the other two presentations, the need for change in health care was highlighted. It was highlighted that health care should be safe, effective, efficient, patient-centred, sustainable, equitable and timely. The development of a conceptual model for the continuity of care experience for midwifery students includes: training birth attendants, assessing the learning of midwifery students, exploring how learning experience results in continued care and debriefing sessions in midwifery training. Nurses and midwives should function effectively when facing challenges. The fundamentals of a health-

care approach with regard to commitment and innovation should be interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and focus on respect as a conceptual investment. Leadership should aim to benefit the public and the profession. With regard to evidenced-based practice, the provision of a framework for clinical practise was emphasised. Clinicians and patients need clear and clean knowledge since knowledge is the enemy of infection and disease.

The theme of ‘changing boards’ also included fundamental standards of duty candour; compassionate, caring and committed nursing; health-care leadership and accurate leadership. The core elements of patient-centred care should be interpreted in the context of a supportive and therapeutic environment. There should also be a relationship between the health professionals and the patients. What the patients experience should also be experienced by the professionals. Leadership should aim to benefit the public and the profession. A sustainable, qualified workforce should be able to deal with the challenges they encounter in the future. Therefore, processes for management include innovation, creativity and adherence, which are the ‘Disney Ways’ for a manager of an educational division. ‘Innovation distinguishes a leader and a follower’ (Steve Jobs, 2010:242).

Finally, the conference presentations included four keynote addresses and 58 oral presentations divided into plenary and concurrent sessions; and 22 poster presentations which continued for the three days. The conference closing address was presented by Michelle Girdler, National President of ANTS, who also bid the conference delegates farewell as they returned to their respective countries. The conference included social sessions for delegates to socialise and network for possible institutional collaborations. The author, who was a delegate at this conference, was exposed to knowledge, skills, positive attitudes and challenges facing nursing education and innovative research initiatives related to technological nursing education and practice.

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Further information on the conference can be obtained from the websites: <http://sapro.com.au/conventions/nnec2014/> and <http://www.aplhealthcare.com.au/>.