

Innovation through Collaboration: An Important Tool for Nursing

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Introduction

The struggle is real. Nurses have a ton of ideas that can help shape the future of direct and indirect patient care. I sit with my colleagues each shift and conceptualize how life might be better if we did this *one* thing. We hold discussions on how a specific product or device might be made to make it easier to perform patient care.

The vast majority of those developing new technology are physicians, medical students, scientists, and those with more of an ease and programs tailored specifically to invite them to develop new innovations. Nursing is just starting to develop a culture within our fabric to invite new ideas and innovations to produce more fruitful outcomes. Take, for example, the Cleveland Clinic Nursing Innovation Summit, Kelly Hancock, DNP, RN, NE-BC, is absolutely correct when she says "innovation is all around us."³

My ascent into innovation and development was a self-projection via a Boolean search on my organization's intranet by searching "invention." I always knew I wanted

to be an inventor, among other things, since the time I was five and was conceptualizing how wait staff might have a better time serving the public if their trays were double sided. At that time, I also had zero concept of how gravitational pull worked.

I wrote an email at 3 am and a few days later received a response inviting me to a meeting. I threw my idea on the table of a simple, more ergonomically designed neck brace. The idea spawned into three years of navigating through people, technology, meetings, and ultimately a provisional patent. Throughout this process, a lot of self-growth happened, like my learning that innovation was so much more than *my* idea and that collaboration was the best thing that could carry a new idea to fruition.

As an ICU nurse, I rely on so many others to help do many things. Help with turning patients, help providing life-saving treatments, and even help directing patients towards new health goals so that I may, respectfully (and hopefully), never see them again. Without collaboration, I wouldn't have the energy or time to do all of my tasks during my shift and moreover, without collaboration -- new ideas would not happen.

Collaboration: A New Challenge

A few months ago, a new challenge presented itself, to develop a collaborative innovation to help a specific patient population. My friend and colleague, Dr. Sarita

Said and I dreamed up an app that could provide free or low-cost services to help prevent cost burdens on stroke patients.

With the concept of our new idea, we took a look into population health. Population health is a rapidly growing field of health care with its importance of proactive application of strategies and interventions, finding opportune and cost-effective solutions to complex health-based problems and producing an asset that can be marketed and shared with healthcare financing organizations. Population health focuses on the health outcomes of a group of individuals, including the distribution of such outcomes within the group.¹

In the coming years, more will be required to develop novel and unique tools to help assist patients. This complex and comprehensive need will require the use of collaboration not only within health systems and large focus areas but also collaboration between health organizations. Nurses are at the forefront of those efforts.

Forming partnerships with our resident-physicians and attending physicians is of singular importance to help foster unique and creative solutions. The ANA Nursing Scope and Standards of Practice define interprofessional collaboration as "Integrated enactment of knowledge, skills, and values and attitudes that define working together across the professions, with other health care workers, and with patients, along with families and

communities, as appropriate to improve health outcomes."²

According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, pillars of interprofessional collaboration include: putting patients first; a commitment from leadership to make interprofessional collaboration an organizational priority; a level playing field that values contributions from all practitioners; effective team communication. Researchers from the University of Tennessee found that innovation and collaboration are not mutually exclusive. Innovation happens through collaboration. As more healthcare organizations contribute to new ideas, innovation will be the new economy and collaboration will be the new currency. Companies can create value from the business process, marketing, and governance through innovation and collaboration.⁴

Collaboration also doesn't have to be a person to person transaction. At companies like Pricewaterhouse Coopers, utilization of humans and machines to collaborate on projects has produced innovative solutions that are part of a virtual organization. Meetings for these companies happen in a virtual setting with global clients and the utilization of new social tools enable the meetings to become more productive as opposed to spending hours with phone and email exchanges.⁶

Conclusion

Nurses can utilize collaborative approaches to successfully do the following: form associations and professional affiliations between common and uncommon networks; speed up the work process of patient care, come up with new ideas and increase the backend work for things like comprehensive literature reviews; provide new exciting energy that can produce new avenues of thought; and increase the speed at which the group reaches the implementation phase.

As Dr. Said and I move towards development of our app, we will utilize a lot of resources through collaboration including different academic medical centers, grants, process mapping and lean tools, virtual meetings, and many other social apps. The future of innovation is bright for nursing and the constant is collaboration.

Works Cited

¹ www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

² nursingworld.org

³ innovations.clevelandclinic.org

⁴ www.forbes.com

⁵ hbr.org

⁶ medium.com/pwc

Author Bio

Nicole E. Sunderland, MSN, RN, SCRNP, CCRN is a professional staff nurse at Penn State Health and a Penn State Health Systems Science Academy Scholar. Her work on the app mentioned in this article was selected by the PA Action Coalition through a video contest to enter the Nursing Innovation Corps, a year-long mentorship and networking fellowship for nurse-led, interprofessional teams of innovators.