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Developments in Client Information Systems

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The Client Information System Working Group of the NLN Council for Nursing Centers is developing guidelines for nursing center client information systems. The Working Group, chaired by Sally Lundeen, PhD, RN, FAAN, has spent four years exploring the most practical and useful ways of organizing client data. The guidelines are broad enough to allow for great diversity in client characteristics and in the nature of the services provided, yet also permit the sharing of some standardized data across nursing centers. This accumulation of national data is essential in advocating for policy changes.

The Client Information System (CIS) includes a minimum data set to be collected, with client demographic information as well as clinical data such as nursing and medical diagnoses, interventions, and outcomes. The CIS promotes the collection of both individual and aggregate data.

The system fosters the use of a standardized clinical nomenclature so that outcomes that are relevant across settings can be tracked, and meaningful benchmarks developed. Efforts to devise consistent nomenclature began at the June 1993 NLN Biennial Convention in Boston. This initial gathering led to Working Group meetings in Chicago and Los Angeles in 1994, in New York and Chicago in 1995, and in Philadelphia in June of 1996.

The Working Group recommended using the Nursing Minimum Data Set (NMDS) (Werley and Lang, 1988) as a general framework for the collection of data within the particular classification system used by each nursing center. The NMDS is composed of 16 elements, including client descriptor elements (e.g., demographics), service elements (e.g., time spent, payment source), and client care elements (e.g., nursing diagnosis, interventions, outcomes). By using

this framework to maintain consistency in data collection, these data can eventually be combined into a national nursing center database. As various nursing center information systems evolve, the Working Group is also working to ensure that phenomena that may be unique to nursing centers are addressed.

The CIS Working Group collaborated with other organizational members of the American Nurses Association Steering Committee for Databases to critique the Core Health Data Elements Project of the National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics. The Core Project is designed to develop consensus about core data that need to be collected in health care systems.

At the June 1996 meeting, the CIS Working Group gathered input about core data from several key resources: Dame June Clark, PhD, RN, past President of the Royal College of Nursing, who represented the International Classification for Nursing Practice; Kathy Milholland, PhD, RN, of the ANA Steering Committee for Databases on Clinical Practice; Karen Martin, MSN, RN, FAAN, a consultant on the Omaha Classification System; and Connie Delaney, PhD, RN, representing the Nursing Diagnosis Extension and Classification Research team of the University of Iowa. Each of these leaders provided a synopsis of their current efforts to improve the classification of nursing practice phenomena.

Collaboration with NLN Councils has also been important to the CIS Working Group effort. This collaboration has occurred via the Intercouncil Task Force, which includes two members from each of three Councils: the Council for Nursing Centers, the Council for Nursing Informatics, and the Council for Nurse Executives. The Intercouncil Task Force will further the develop-

ment of the CIS national database by providing consultation in information system development to software vendors and nursing centers.

The next CIS Working Group meeting will take place on Saturday, June 7, 1997 in Portland, Oregon, just prior to the NLN Biennial Convention. The Working Group welcomes additional input. People with expertise in nursing center information systems who have not been able to attend the Working Group meetings are invited to send a letter of interest to:

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 Centers
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 PO Box 1881
 Milwaukee, WI 53201-1881

References

- Werley, H.H. and Lang, N.M. (Eds.) (1988). *Identification of the Nursing Minimum Data Set*. New York: Springer.

The management information system being developed at the University of Iowa by Dr. Connie Delaney is designed to collect information about the environment and the financial and personnel characteristics of organizations. Nursing centers interested in participating in a pilot test of this system are invited to contact:

Dr. Marilyn Frenn
 6173frennm@vms.csd.mu.edu
 or 414-288-3845 (phone)
 or 414-288-1597 (FAX).

Participants may agree to simply review the instrument, or to collect data. If you are interested, please include the name of the contact person, the size and type of center, and the contact's phone, FAX, and e-mail address.