Demonstrating the Value of Nursing Care through Use of a Unique Nurse Identifier

Policy Statement

Executive Summary

As healthcare transitions to a value-based care model, nursing documentation in the electronic health record (EHR), enterprise resource planning (ERP), and other technologies and systems becomes increasingly important. Nursing documentation can be used to capture social determinants of health data, as well as to measure improvements in individual and population health outcomes, patient safety, operational efficiency and clinical effectiveness. However, today, nursing's contribution to the health and care of individuals and communities is difficult to measure and often invisible. This lack of visibility is due, in part, to the absence of a unique identifier for nurses.[i] Hospitals and health systems need the ability to uniquely identify nurses in the EHR, ERP, and other technologies and systems for documentation, education, research and training purposes.[ii] Use of a unique numeric identifier for individual nurses within all health IT systems is instrumental to the aggregation, synthesis and publication of data and research demonstrating the value and contributions of nursing to better health outcomes.

Benefits of a Unique Nurse Identifier

The widespread use of a unique nurse identifier will enable measurement of the impact of nursing practice, including nurses' role in contributing to safe and effective health and care practices and enhancing enterprise resource planning. Leveraging a unique nurse identifier will enable scientific inquiry whereby researchers can measure and quantify nursing care and its impact on health outcomes. The appropriate use of nursing resources will also be informed by using a unique nurse identifier to examine the variability of direct nursing care time and costs per patient and the relationships between patient and nurse characteristics and nursing costs.[iii]

Policy Recommendation

The Alliance for Nursing Informatics is collaborating with the Nursing Knowledge: Big Data Science Initiative Policy and Advocacy Workgroup and other key stakeholders to advocate for use of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing identifier (NCSBN ID) as a unique nurse identifier.[iv] This policy recommendation states that:

The NCSBN ID should be used by key stakeholders as a nurse identifier to help demonstrate the value of nursing through research, and enhance individual care and health outcomes via more comprehensive documentation in the EHR, ERP, and other technologies and systems.

Background

The NCSBN ID is automatically generated for each registered nurse and licensed practical/vocational nurse when they take the NCLEX examination. Each NCSBN ID is then made freely available via the Nursys database. Nursys comprises a suite of systems and databases containing nurse license and license discipline information and updates that are provided by nursing regulatory bodies (NRBs). Nurses who received licensure prior to the implementation of NCLEX have been assigned an ID through a matching process with NRBs and were added to the Nursys database, where their data are also updated regularly.

The system also allows for nurses to track their own licenses via the ID and be provided with the latest information on license status and notification when licenses are to be renewed. Because Nursys grants public access, there is also opportunity for academics and quality experts to identify characteristics of populations of nurses, such as medical-surgical or critical care nurses, and the relationship of those characteristics to patient outcomes. To assure data security, NCSBN maintains proper data security policies, procedures and requirements, and performs assessments, audits, penetration tests and vulnerability scans.

Call to Action

A unified voice is essential for advancing advocacy efforts to ensure adoption of a unique nurse identifier for documentation, education, research and training purposes. This identifier can then be used to measure nursing's impact on individual and population outcomes, patient safety, operational efficiency, resource allocation and clinical effectiveness. By extracting nursing-specific data, such as

those from comprehensive documentation and nursing administrative records in EHRs, ERPs, and other technologies and systems, the impact of a unique nurse identifier can be realized.

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References

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