

Human Side of Virtual Nursing: Managing the Future



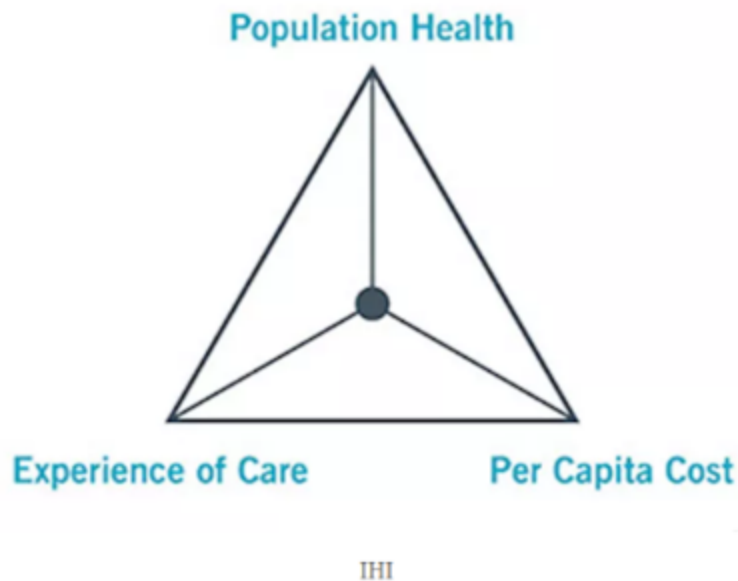
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The future is about embracing change. We live in an era marked by more technological advancements and accelerations than we have ever imagined, and what an exciting moment to witness. The pandemic uncovered the art of the possible along with cracks across all industries, especially in healthcare. Many clinical and non-clinical healthcare professionals answered the call to tackle the COVID-19 virus, and many did with their lives to save nations. We are at a pivotal moment for healthcare to rebuild its fractured foundation by strengthening the nursing workforce for the sake of the future.

Can the [Triple Aim](#) set forth by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) to improve the health of the population, enhance the experience and outcomes of the patient, and reduce per capita cost of care for the benefit of communities ever be achievable without addressing the issues that plague the nursing profession? Likely not.

The IHI Triple Aim



Institute for Healthcare improvement (IHI)

Digital solutions proposed by many technology companies promising to address the nursing challenges are limitless. Virtual Nursing is one of the most widely proposed solutions and has gained recognition as one of the [top trends of 2023](#) along with Generative AI. The rush to solve these known issues with a one-size-fits-all technology approach without an understanding of how it came to be is a sure recipe for failure as evidence has shown, [technology without the humanity is worthless](#).

This article Managing the Future is the first of a four-part content series, the Human-Side of Virtual Nursing, which offers insights on how to harness human ingenuity and the capabilities of Virtual Nursing to navigate this new era of unprecedented change for the nursing profession.

Change is Required for the Future of Nursing

Many healthcare organizations are operating at catastrophic nurse staffing levels. Others are turning to [unsustainable bonus offers to attract new hires](#) or resorting to [costly temporary staff to fill immediate needs](#). Growing challenges across the profession include [high turnovers of new hires and graduate nurses due to burn-out](#). The profession has become so dissatisfying, [experienced nurses are leaving the](#)

[profession or retiring](#), and as a compounding consequence, many organizations are [shutting down clinical departments and/or eliminated clinical programs](#) due to a lack of personnel and other reasons. Take a moment to reflect, should the nursing profession continue down this painful path, or is it time to rethink the nursing care delivery model for the sake of the future of nursing?

[“You can’t outrun a bad diet”](#) metaphorically describes the desperate approach to addressing these nursing issues by applying strategies proven to be inefficient while expecting a different outcome. For the nursing workforce to heal and thrive, not just as a profession but for humanity, which depends on it to grow and prosper, change must be embraced, a new approach must be applied, and nurses must be willing to co-develop the solutions for addressing nursing issues.

Virtual Nursing: The Game Changer

Change is constant and, when embraced, can be positively transformational. Nurses have always embraced change throughout history, from responding to a sudden change in a patient’s health status to collectively addressing regulatory policies, adopting electronic health records (EHR), and, most recently, bravely tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. While these events have come unexpectedly, and addressing them has been challenging, nurses have adapted while continuing to battle the issues that plague the profession, and it is unacceptable to allow it to continue this way.

"The secret to change is to focus all your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new." ~ Socrates

A clear distinction must be made that Virtual Nursing is not about a digital platform, a software application, or the newest innovative bells and whistles. Rather, Virtual Nursing is about coming to the realization and acknowledging that the nursing profession is ripe for a redesign in the way care is delivered and can greatly benefit from an infusion of objective revisioning in this new era of rapid technological advancements. Circling around the decades-old problems will lead nowhere but eventually down the drain.

From our experience, successful virtual nursing projects require change management strategies that are uniquely designed with the organization’s culture at the core by leveraging the various frameworks and methodologies that suit it best. Regardless of the method applied, the key is not to underestimate the need for the nurses and ancillary personnel closest to the work to be informed and included and have

their opinions and ideas heard about what change should look like. Nurses for many years have felt decisions are made for them not with them. Nurses at various, if not all, levels should be part of defining how and what Virtual Nursing should be at the organization to drive greater ownership, achieve desired behaviors, and ultimately succeed. Revisioning and co-creating the workflows and processes required for Virtual Nursing must include clinical nurses, ancillary personnel, and nursing leadership to collectively redesign and reinvent the organization's nursing future. Highlighted in our [Virtual Nursing Early Wins – Journey Ahead](#), which shared how clients such as CommonSpirit, Providence, Trinity Health, St. Luke's, etc. have embraced this fundamental approach by early adoption of these change management strategies and, as a result, achieved tangible benefits such as high nursing workforce retention, improved staff well-being, cost savings, etc. as they move towards [Care Reinvention](#).

Is Your Organization Change-Ready?

In this new era marked by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, Virtual Nursing has the potential to transform nursing care delivery models substantially. While organizations have a wide selection of change strategies to utilize, we believe that the chosen approach must accelerate value by driving alignment, ability, and adoption, which is necessary for empowering a resilient and change-ready workforce.