"Get online to learn and be part of a huge global nursing group"

When I qualified as a nurse in 1990 I was so relieved to have completed the arduous journey to registration that I vowed to finish studying and concentrate on doing the job. I then found that there was this thing called life-long learning and even began to enjoy the process of education to the extent that I've never stopped studying since.

Enjoyment of learning and professional obligations is an incentive to keep up to date. However, most important to nurses is the power these give us when making decisions for the benefit of our patients. If we have the latest evidence, they will get the most appropriate care.

As a newly qualified nurse, I had practical difficulties in studying. Nursing journals were a valuable way of keeping abreast of news but nursing libraries were often distant or barred to non-students and the hospital library was aimed at doctors. Now we have the internet, which is invaluable.

Until recently, using the internet involved investing considerable time and money. However, the internet is now part of everyday life, not just the preserve of geeks. Smartphones and tablets make it possible to access it anytime, anywhere.

As internet users, nurses are fortunate to be part of a huge global group. There are hundreds of nursing journals accessible online as well as many resources specifically for nurses by nurses. These are getting easier to use, and entering the right key words into a search engine such as Google generally finds reliable sources of information. Of course, it may also find unreliable sources. The way to sift the wheat from the chaff is by making sure you know who is telling you what.

Reliable sources include government sites or those sponsored by professional bodies. Most paper journals have their own websites and provide additional content to subscribers; for example Nursing Times offers online learning and an archive of clinical articles. Google Scholar is a search engine designed to find academic articles only; anyone can use it to find double-blind peer reviewed articles previously only accessible through university databases.

Another advantage of the internet is that it has made interactive learning easier. Journal websites often have space for readers to comment on and discuss articles. Social networks such as Facebook and Twitter have numerous nurse-related activities including events where nurses have discussions live online, often with experts in the field. More formal learning can be completed online, from taster units to full academic degrees. We are fortunate to have such easy access to the knowledge we need. If you haven't engaged with it yet, you may find it easier and more valuable than you expect.

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It is well known that people with bariatric needs – broadly speaking, those with a BMI over 40 – are at increased risk of a range of health problems.

Asked to name these, most of us would list conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and respiratory problems. Yet skin care can be a daily problem. Maintaining skin hygiene with large skin folds and inaccessible areas is difficult, and puts people at risk of heat rash, blocked and inflamed sweat glands and bacterial and fungal infections, while weight increases their risk of pressure ulcers.

Our review article (page 22) discusses the literature on skin care for people with bariatric needs, and concludes that care tends to be based on custom rather than evidence. The authors call for research to provide evidence on how to maintain skin integrity and hygiene in this patient group.

Evidence absent on skin hygiene in bariatric care

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