**Professionalism in nursing 6: the nurse as innovator**

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**Author commentary: Professionalism in nursing 6**

Modern nursing is based on the ‘gold standard’ of evidence-based practice. As nurses we are using this to provide a high standard of quality care for our patients, aligning with our ability to problem solve and provide rationale for interventions. Traditionally, nursed were often seen as task oriented, but now the focus is on person-centred care and the understanding that there is no ‘one size fits all’ model. Nurses are often best placed to identify areas where change would improve practice or patient care. This is how nurses become – or should feel empowered to become – innovators. The concept of innovation often conjures up ideas of industry or medical devices, but small changes to an already existing method of care or framework can have a great effect.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council’s (2018) Code outlines the need to prioritise people and practise effectively, and innovation aligns with these standards. Famous innovators and innovations are embedded in nursing, with perhaps the most well-known being Florence Nightingale and her improvements in infection control. However, there have been many others; Elise Sørensen created ostomy bags in the 1950s, and Anita Dorr invented the cardiac arrest trolley in the 1960s. These are innovations by nurses that are integrated into our practice and benefit our patient care to this day.

The recent Covid-19 pandemic has triggered a wave of innovations led by empowered nurses during a time of uncertainty and change. Innovation should always be encouraged. Our profession is reliant on policies, frameworks and guidelines, but we should avoid the attitude of ‘it has always been done that way’ if there is a potential to improve practice and update the care we offer patients. Change in practice can be challenging and there are many barriers to it, but for each barrier that is overcome there is a sense of pride that comes with innovation. Morale is also boosted when we are part of a creative and forward-thinking workforce.

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**Discussion points**

* The use of evidence-based practice underpins modern nursing care. Discuss the benefits to patient care of using the most up-to-date research and guidelines.
* It can be challenging to be a nurse innovator in healthcare. Give examples of some of the barriers that there might be and think of potential solutions for overcoming them.
* Patient safety in nursing is paramount. What factors would you need to think of before implementing any innovations with regards to patient safety?
* For decades nurses have been innovators. What innovations are you aware of that have been developed or implemented by nurses from any field of nursing, or by midwives?
* Take one of the examples mentioned above. Now imagine for example that the cardiac arrest trolley had never been invented – what do you think would be the practice now, or what might have been developed instead?

**Your notes**