Electronic Communication in Nursing Specialty Organizations: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

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Disclosure Information
Speaker: Sheri M. Carson

• Ms. Carson has no relevant financial or nonfinancial relationships to disclose.

Objectives

• Upon completion of this presentation, participants will be able to:
  1. Describe the historical and future perspectives of the use of electronic communication within nursing specialty organizations.
  2. Identify both advantages and disadvantages to the use of organizational listservs.
  3. Identify how to appropriately use electronic listservs to communicate with and professionally support each other.
Electronic Communication

- Electronic communication includes, but is not limited to, email, social networking, texting, instant messaging, and EMRs.
- Electronic communication within nursing specialty organizations most frequently takes place by the use of group listservs.
- A listserv is an electronic mailing list used to send messages and/or announcements to people who share a common interest in the content of the messages.

Historical Perspectives

- LISTSERV was the first software program to automate the administration of email lists.
  - Invented by Eric Thomas in 1986
  - Originally created for IBM mainframe computers on the BITNET academic network
  - LISTSERV is a registered trademark licensed exclusively to L-Soft International, Inc.
- LISTSERV has now become the most time-tested and reliable email list management product on the market today.

History of the Listserv in Nursing Specialty Organizations

- Use of listserv discussion lists were first introduced by nursing specialty organizations in the early-mid 1990’s.
- Purpose was to connect nurses within a specific specialty area and allow for opportunities to exchange ideas, ask questions, and network with other members around the country.
Purpose of the Listserv in Nursing Specialty Organizations

- Offers the opportunity to engage in a "virtual conference" with colleagues and experts throughout the world (Schoch & Shooshan, 1997).
- Supports networking and professional growth opportunities
- Supports member engagement in professional organizations

Benefits of Listservs

- Network and discuss thoughts & ideas
- Keep abreast of new issues & practices
- Obtain answers from experts
- Provide answers to others
- Allows participation in discussions regardless of geographical location, social status (e.g., educational level, physical disability), & time constraints

Thompson (2002)

- Study reviewing the communications posted on the RehabNurse LISTSERV over an 18-month period
- Found that the listserv provides quick access to peers, an avenue for information sharing, and a unique support system.
  - All offer nurses professional practice benefits
- Topics discussed included
  - Professional and clinical issues
  - Disability and impairment
  - Administration and regulation
  - Cultural and international issues
  - Listserv housekeeping issues

- Study on Rehabilitation Nurses
- Found that nurses used the RehabNurse LISTSERV as a means of "keeping up," sharing, learning, problem solving, and gaining support within their practice.
- Nurse respondents described their listserv involvement in terms of community and connectedness.
- Postings were shared both within the discussion group as well as within the nurses' work environments (team members, peers, administrators, patients, and families).

Hew & Hara (2008)

- Study on critical care and advanced-practice nurse practitioners
- Found that online listserv participation offers a viable avenue for the continuous professional development of nurses by:
  - Providing nurses the opportunity to make more informed decisions about their professional practice
  - Keeping abreast with up-to-date changes in their specialty areas when they shared knowledge with one another

Challenges of Listservs

- Difficult to ascertain the level of competence of participants and the validity of responses
- Overwhelming number of emails
  - "Needless chatter" & irrelevant material
  - Individual responses sent to all members
- Discussions are often dominated by a relatively small number of participants

- Schoch and Shooshan, 1997
Challenges of Listservs

• Studies have shown that members with little field (clinical) experience often participate in listserv activities to the same extent as members with significantly more field experience
  – Less advantage in novices drawing upon the wisdom of distinguished elders
  – More advantage in having a community for searching for information and participating in open discussions

- Schoch & Shooshan, 1997

Participation Motivators

• Factors that encourage knowledge sharing among listserv members
  – Reciprocity
  – Collectivism
  – Personal gain
  – Respectful environment
  – Altruism
  – Technology

- Hew & Hara, 2008

Listservs in Nursing Specialty Organizations – The GOOD

• Appropriate (Intended) Use
  – Networking among members (national and international)
  – Addressing challenges within clinical practice (i.e., staffing, provider reimbursement, and scheduling for practitioners)
  – Professional growth
    • Sharing clinical pearls and ideas
    • Discussing the latest evidence-based research and integration into/implications on clinical practice
  – Increasing member involvement and engagement
Listservs in Nursing Specialty Organizations – The GOOD

• Appropriate (Intended) Use, cont’d
  – “Keeping up” with the organization, including organization-based volunteer opportunities and community outreach
  – Mentoring and retention of members
  – Teaching and clinical preceptorship of student members
  – Encouraging/supporting specialty nursing certification
  – Advocating for positive impact and change in local/state/national governments regarding health issues and policies

Listservs in Nursing Specialty Organizations – The BAD

• Inappropriate (Unintended) Use
  – Providing patient-specific contact or other personal protected health information
    • Unacceptable, even if trying to connect patient with additional services and/or support – HIPAA!!
    • Listservs are often not monitored or restricted – difficult to prevent wide-distribution of patient-sensitive and identifying information
  • Personal “bandwagons” or “soap boxes”
  • Product endorsement, promotion, or sales
  • Attachment of journal articles and other copyright-protected information (unless you own the copyright)

Listservs in Nursing Specialty Organizations – The UGLY

• Inappropriate (Unintended) Use
  – Attacking, bullying, or belittling other members
  – Whistleblowing
  – Badmouthing employers and/or coworkers
  – Posting defamatory, abusive, profane, threatening, offensive, or illegal materials
  – Remember, ANYONE has the potential to see your listserv email and forward it to others.
    • Don’t say or post anything that you wouldn’t say directly to someone’s face or want to be made public/connected back to you!
Listserv Etiquette

- Include a signature tag on all messages
  - Your name, affiliation, location, and e-mail address
- State concisely and clearly the topic of your comments in the subject line
- Include only the relevant portions of the original message in your reply
- Only send a message to the entire list when it contains information that everyone can benefit from
- Send messages such as "thanks for the information" or "me, too" to individuals, not to the entire list
- Warn other list subscribers of lengthy messages either in the subject line or at the beginning of the message body

*Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association, 2014

Listserv Etiquette, cont’d

- Always use proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation
  - Avoid all capitals or excessive use of exclamation points
- Plain text format is always best
- Avoid including graphics, charts, images and attachments
- Be cautious when using humor & sarcasm
- Stick to the purpose of the listserv

Listserv Etiquette, cont’d

- Before responding to a listserv message, check other subscriber responses to see if someone has already commented.
  - Avoids duplication of messages
- Remember that you are interacting with PEOPLE. Consider yourself as having a face-to-face conversation when deciding what to post and to whom to send it.
  - Treat others as you wish to be treated
The Future of Listservs in Nursing Specialty Organizations

• Nursing specialty organizations continue to use listservs to support member engagement, professional growth and development, and networking opportunities
• Future growth of the listserv will serve to further promote the nursing profession, evidence-based specialty nursing practice, and, when used appropriately, improved patient outcomes

References


Questions??
Thank You!! 😊

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