Design of a Proposed Nursing Knowledge Portal

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**INTRODUCTION**

Nurses responsible for making strategic decisions in the hospital are tracking performance metrics that accurately measure how well the hospital is performing. These nurses are always looking for the appropriate strategies that can be combined with qualitative measures to respond just in time and accurately to clients. The information presented to strategic decision makers is used to monitor and analyse the performance of the hospital so that, when necessary, appropriate modifications can be made for the hospital to remain relevant to the community. Hence, information leveraged on demand in hospitals would enhance knowledge discovery with better content organization and management of patient and non-patient related information from multiple sources to assist nurses in their day-to-day work.

In recent years, knowledge portals, as single-point-access software systems intended to provide easy and timely access to information and to support communities of knowledge workers who share common goals, have emerged as a key tool for supporting knowledge work.

This article describes our experience in designing a proposed knowledge portal prototype for nurses at the Singapore General Hospital (SGH). A team of four postgraduate students from the Division of Information Studies at the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) was formed to study the feasibility of implementing a knowledge portal for nurses (Chan, 2004; Girish, 2004; Jayakumaran, 2004; Liu, 2003), with the specific objectives identified:

- **Objective 1:** Gathering requirements of the knowledge portal.
- **Objective 2:** Constructing a mock-up of the knowledge portal.
- **Objective 3:** Evaluating the knowledge portal to get initial feedback from the nurses.

In subsequent sections, we describe how the three objectives were met, the findings made, and recommendations suggested for implementation of a proposed knowledge portal at SGH.

**GATHERING REQUIREMENTS**

To gather requirements for the portal, we interviewed the nurses as well as examined the existing SGH nursing intranet. This involved understanding the organization’s goals and objectives, the observation of existing systems, studying of existing procedures and discussion with the nurses and the management.

**INTERVIEWS OF NURSES**

The team scheduled interviews with a stratified sample of nursing population at SGH to understand the needs and wants of the nurses. The focus of the requirements gathering phase was on *what* needs to be done. Table 1 shows the set of requirements for the knowledge portal summarized from the results of interviews and questionnaire. For example, Liu (2003) identified Yellow Pages as the portal feature that would meet the nurses’ needs in Column 1 and gave a description of its use in Column 2. Column 3 is the result of the final analysis from the survey conducted and literature reviewed; in this case, it was an expert locator system to profile expertise in the organization so the nurses could seek help within the organization easily (see Table 1, Row 1).
A review of the existing SGH nursing intranet was conducted to understand the objectives and needs of the nursing department. Since the inception of the nursing intranet in 1998, it has served the Department of Nursing Administration well and has helped to elevate the problem of information management facing the department. However, since then, other systems were being developed in the hospital to address specific needs and with it, came the challenges of managing the overwhelming amount of information available. As a result, there is an info glut in the SGH organization that needs to be addressed. At present, the SGH intranet itself has more than 90,000 pages.

Table 2 shows the proposed recommendations of the SGH knowledge portal over the existing SGH nursing intranet to relieve the information overload problem as well as to capture and share knowledge. The features of the generic knowledge portal shown in Table 2 with Column 1 were derived from Collins (2003) and matched with the existing SGH nursing intranet in Column 2.

For example, Table 2, Row 1 describes the feature organization and management. The situation of the current SGH nursing intranet is described in Column 2, which was manual and decentralized by department and task. Column 3 gives the ideal situation in which the knowledge portal hopes to achieve, where there is centralized management, with easy management of group and users’ rights.

**Mock-up Design of the Proposed Knowledge Portal**

An interactive mock-up of the knowledge portal was created with simple HTML (HyperText Markup Language) using Macromedia Dreamweaver MX. Figure 1 gives an illustration of the home page of the proposed knowledge portal for a nurse with an administrative role. It shows the nurse as the central object for the portal with access to various information sources, work-related resources, as well as knowledge sharing tools for communication and collaboration with other colleagues. Due to constraint of space, only selected design features unique to the proposed SGH nursing knowledge portal user interface are briefly explained.

**Message Center**

The message center provided a quick link to the user’s e-mail, calendar, address book, as well as an expert locator (Collins, 2003). To ensure that people are able to seek help from within the organization, Collins (2003) and Terra and
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