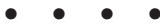


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A Nursing Portfolio: Documenting Your Professional Journey

Abstract



Professional profiling may enhance one's career development. The opportunities to use a current profile abound, and include applying for a new position, a leadership role in a professional society, a scholarship or an award, or career advancement. The true professional updates the profile on an annual basis, emphasizing significant personal and professional accomplishments. Documentation and validation of one's credentials may require substantial effort—but such effort is worth it. Profiling is a step toward recognition and success.

In today's professional arena, with a demand for excellence unparalleled in our lifetime, the nursing portfolio is being used to document one's career and expertise. Documentation of professional practice is an expectation in a professional nurse's life and yet we often procrastinate until the need is immediate. Continuing competence mandates documentation of practice and professional achievement for nurses. The portfolio represents a record of one's professional development, a means of accountability through self or peer assessment, and a professional history for the nurse.¹

• A TOOL FOR CONTINUED COMPETENCE

Current baccalaureate educational programs suggest the creation of a professional profile that is initiated during one's student days and continued throughout one's professional career. The portfolio is a growing trend for nursing professionals who want to manage their own careers.² The senior seminar course prepares students for their future careers, including development of job search strategies.³

In October 1998, the Pew Health Professions Commission, an independent panel with no administrative power, criticized the way that health professionals were

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regulated. In an effort to better protect the consumer, the commission recommended that states require regulated healthcare practitioners to “demonstrate their competence in the knowledge, judgment, technical skills and interpersonal skills relevant to their jobs throughout their careers.”⁴ The commission, led by former US Senator George J. Mitchell (D-ME), suggested the use of a portfolio/professional profile model. Such requirements are already in place in the United Kingdom, and in Ontario, Canada where it is referred to as “Reflective Practice.” Reflective Practice requires nurses to perform a self-assessment, obtain peer feedback, create and implement a learning plan, and evaluate that plan. The Kentucky and Oklahoma boards of nursing are developing plans to require professional portfolios for relicensing. These requisite portfolios will highlight education, skill maintenance, professional and volunteer activities, and practice activities related to the work setting.⁵

Professional practice comprises more than just knowledge; it addresses the art of practice and thinking about what does and does not work and how to alter one’s actions to achieve better outcomes. The ability to learn from experience is a component of *novice to expert*, a process by which the nurse has experienced and learned from diverse situations to anticipate the future.⁶ The professional portfolio is a tool for continued competence, spanning career changes, advanced education, community service, certification, publication, and more.

• APPLICATIONS

Application for the novice nurse is clear: the portfolio documents learning experiences, internships, mentor/mentee/protégé relationships. The mentor has the capacity to use his or her experience and influence to provide certain functions for the protégé, such as advocacy, advisement, emotional support, career counseling, sponsorship/showcasing of the protégé’s abilities, access to professional networks, empathy, teaching of skills and knowledge, protection, coaching, and friendship. In addition to the development significance of mentorship for both mentors and protégés, mentoring has consistently been found to be related to positive occupational and performance outcomes for protégés, mentors, and organizations.^{7,8}

The established staff nurse may apply the portfolio to prepare for a career change, a promotion, or a position within a professional society. To the nurse manager or leader, the portfolio can help to evaluate and track staff successes, to implement performance appraisal systems, or to identify potential rising stars. She may use her own portfolio to perform a self-appraisal or to apply for executive management training, a committee appointment, or a board position.

Infusion Nurses Society

Within the Infusion Nurses Society (INS), there are ample opportunities for the use of one’s portfolio. Awards, scholarships, and recognitions given at the Annual Meeting and Industrial Exhibition require one to submit a written application. Development of the application would be facilitated by immediate access to a well-documented portfolio. When the nominating committee chair seeks potential candidates for office, she would be impressed by an individual who has maintained a current record of her education, experience, and credentials. What sets you apart from other potential candidates is your ability to demonstrate credentials in a professional manner; presentation truly does matter!

Infusion Nurses Certification Corporation

The Infusion Nurses Certification Corporation (INCC) annually recognizes a Certified Registered Nurse, Infusion (CRNI) with the prestigious CRNI of the Year Award. That award is given to the individual who best demonstrates a commitment to certification and professional practice. Again, the application process requires validation of one’s professional practice, education, and credential; a current portfolio can facilitate the process.

Career Moves

Change occurs over the course of one’s professional career. Such change may involve relocation, a return to school, marriage, divorce, or childbirth. These stages in one’s personal and professional life signal a time to reflect on and update one’s professional portfolio. The portfolio tells your story. It reflects your professional accomplishments and documents your career. The portfolio captures past experiences and builds upon those experiences to enable you to present a professional image. That demand may arise when you move to another state and require licensure by waiver, or when you move from the hospital to the alternate site environment and need to document cardiopulmonary resuscitation skill levels, teaching credentials, and certification. You may require copies of past academic scores when you apply for a degree completion or master’s program.

• METHODOLOGY

Image is a reflection of who you are, what you have done, where you have been, your challenges, opportunities, and your commitments. Components of one’s portfolio vary, but in general include copies of professional licenses, examination scores, credentialing docu-

ments, continuing education certificates, advanced level education, honors, professional society activities, and references. Ideally, by keeping such documents in a portfolio, you have access to the information on demand. The most basic components of a portfolio are a current resume and curriculum vitae.

The Resume

The resume should reflect your professional accomplishments and should be updated regularly. Polishing up a resume should become a familiar routine over time. A resume is the one document that should be updated anytime you have something new to add, such as the completion of a major milestone, a great effect on your organization's bottom line, a professional society award, or the completion of a clinical competency. The resume should describe your educational preparation, employment history (including descriptions of major responsibilities in each position held), and continuous learning.

Quality is equally important, and a minor typographical error may cause your resume to be immediately discarded, without additional consideration. Your

resume is a reflection of you, and a document with errors is indicative of one who is not detail-oriented. In the nursing profession, we must maintain attention to detail to avoid potential errors, to enhance the clinical environment in which we provide care, and to ensure accuracy.

The format of the resume may vary, but in general, it is limited to 2 printed pages using a 12-point type size and a font that is easy to read, such as Times New Roman or Courier. The document may or may not include an objective. For example, if you are a home healthcare nursing professional in search of a home health position, you might clearly state your objective as: "Seeking a growth position in the home infusion field." More recently, potential employers report a tendency to exclude the objective and to go directly to content.

STYLE

The first style is known as *chronological*, and the header includes your name, address, and telephone and e-mail contact information. Work experience follows, also in chronological order, followed by education and postgraduate level education. Non-nursing work experience that may have occurred prior to your nursing

	Name and Credentials Address City, State, Zip Home phone (h)	Email address
Office phone		
Experience		
June 97 – present	Infusion Therapy Coordinator ABC Medical Center Brooklyn, NY	
	Manage infusion therapy department with 46 FTEs. Services include pain management, peripherally inserted central catheters, and outpatient care.	
May 94 – May 97	Nurse Clinician, IV Team XYZ Hospital Atlanta, GA	
	Performed vascular access, managed peripheral and central lines, educated patients, staff and others regarding infusion care. Developed policies and procedures for home care.	
Education	BSN, Alexandria University Atlanta, GA, May 1994	
Licensure/Certification	New York State License #123456 CRNI, granted by Infusion Nurses Certification Corporation	
Professional Organizations	Infusion Nurses Society American Nurses Association New York State Nurses Association Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing	
Publications/Presentations	PICC Care, Journal of Infusion Nursing 2000 1(4): 41-47 Role of the IV Team in a Teaching Hospital, presented to New York Chapter of Infusion Nurses Society, June 1999 Editor, Nursing Practice Council Newsletter	
Personal	Fluent in Spanish	

FIGURE 1.
Chronological resume. Adapted from Medical Economics Company, Montvale, NJ.

career might demonstrate diversity.⁹ Other headers might be volunteer or community work and personal interests. The chronological resume documents stability and loyalty (Figure 1).¹⁰

A *functional* resume clusters skills in categories such as clinical practice, supervision, and administration. It is an ideal format when one has gaps in employment or frequent job changes. This format works well for retirees returning to work, professionals making lateral moves, and career changers, and when a part of your background might not meet the specific job requirements. The functional resume shows growth, advancement, and ability to change (Figure 2).

The next variation is the *combination*, which emphasizes major functional strengths with a chronological employment history. The *combination* high-

lights strengths in a specific field of clinical practice or academia. Regardless of the format, use action verbs to illustrate experience and to make a strong statement.

The *electronic* resume includes the same basic data as a traditional one. However, because an electronic resume will be seen only if it contains the keywords that an employer is searching for, you will need to include words such as infusion therapy, peripheral line management, and intravascular access. If you are applying for a position online, remember that some applicant tracking systems search only the first 80 words or so of a resume; if the computer does not find keyword matches by then, it moves on to the next resume. In the electronic format, avoid graphics, shading, italics, and underlining (Figure 3).

Name and Credentials	
Address	
City, State, Zip	
Office phone	Home phone
Email address	
Professional Skills	
Patient care	Successfully plan and manage infusion care in a tertiary care setting.
Patient education	Provide infusion self-care education to patients and their caregivers.
Management	As nurse manager, develop policies and procedures for infusion team. Directly supervise 16 RNs
Employment History	
June 97 – present	Infusion Therapy Coordinator ABC Medical Center Brooklyn, NY
May 94 – May 97	Nurse Clinician, IV Team XYZ Hospital Atlanta, GA
Education	
BSN, Alexandria University, Atlanta, GA, May 94	
Licensure/Certification	
New York State License #123456 CRNI, granted by Infusion Nurses Certification Corporation	
Professional Organizations	
Infusion Nurses Society American Nurses Association New York State Nurses Association Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing	
Publications/Presentations	
PICC Care, Journal of Infusion Nursing 2000 1(4): 41-47 Role of the IV Team in a Teaching Hospital, New York Chapter, Infusion Nurses Society, June 98 Editor, Nursing Practice Council Newsletter	

FIGURE 2.
Functional resume.

	Name and Credentials Address City, State, Zip	Office Phone	Home Phone
Keyword Summary:	Nursing, Healthcare, RN, Certification, Infusion Therapy, Intravascular, Home Care, Publications, Infusion Nurses Society, Sigma Theta Tau, Home Care		
Objective	Infusion Therapy Nurse Manager		
Experience June 97 – present	Infusion Therapy Coordinator ABC Medical Center Brooklyn, NY Manage infusion therapy department with 46 FTEs. Services include pain management, peripherally inserted central catheters, and outpatient care.		
May 94 – May 97	Nurse Clinician, IV Team XYZ Hospital Atlanta, GA Performed vascular access, managed peripheral and central lines, educated patients, staff and others regarding infusion care. Developed policies and procedures for home care.		
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Personal	Fluent in Spanish		

FIGURE 3.
Electronic resume.

REFERENCES

References are no longer included within the document itself; interviewers will request references, so a separate typewritten, updated list of those references with full names, titles, and contact information should be readily available. Again, the reference list becomes a vital part of your professional portfolio.

Curriculum Vitae

Curriculum vitae (CV) is derived from Latin *curriculum*, meaning course of action, and *vitae*, meaning life. The CV differs from a resume in that it has no size limitation; it continues to document your credentials and achievements as you obtain them. The CV tells your professional story in detail.¹¹ It should be updated regularly to include committee appointments, professional presentations, and publications. The CV will be used to qualify you as an expert witness in a medical malprac-

tice case, to obtain a faculty position, to compete for a scholarship or award, and to document your expertise as a speaker, researcher, or consultant. It should include membership in the INS, Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing, participation in the International Council of Nurses, faculty positions, and professional or community involvement. Again, it should be updated to mirror your most current accomplishments as well as those that indicate interest and active participation in the organization from whom you are requesting support. For example, an application to INS for a scholarship award should not simply include, but rather highlight, your participation in INS activities, your commitment to this organization, and your ongoing support. Reviewers may not know you personally; thus, the packet is sometimes the only representation of a candidate.¹² The CV personalizes your campaign and helps you to sell yourself. Content and presentation are important; a product that reads well and looks attractive leaves a favorable first impression (Figure 4).

Office phone	Name and credentials Address City, Country, Zip Fax	Email address	@
Employment History Most recent or current job first	Position title Name of organization City, State		
Educational History Most recent first	Degree or program Institute or University City, State		
Publications <i>Books</i>			
<i>Journal Articles</i> (Refereed)			
<i>Additional Articles and Reports</i> Include: Presidential reports as President of nursing society, projects, presentations and white papers			
Research Topic, amount and source of funding			
Awards and Honors Include leadership and practice awards, faculty appointments			
Professional Activities and Community Service Include activities within your own community			
Memberships Infusion Nurses Society Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing American Nurses Association			
Editorial Boards Journal of Infusion Nursing			
Advisory Boards Clinical Practice Committee, Cancer Institute			
Presentations <u>International</u>			
Date	Title of presentation, type of meeting at which it was presented, city, country		
<u>National</u>			
Date	Title of presentation, type of meeting at which it was presented and city		
Other Activities or Consultation Advisory Committees/Consultation			

FIGURE 4.
Curriculum vitae.

• THE EVIDENCE BASE

The shift toward evidence-based nursing practice to improve patient outcomes continues to gain momentum. Decisions and practice strategies based on the best available evidence, including research and other valid data, ensure quality. Profiling enables you to actually build your own evidence-base in a professional portfolio (Table 1).

Your portfolio can substantiate your personal development and growth. Its contents are evidence of your professional achievements. A typical format is described

in Table 2. From the working portfolio you can create a presentation portfolio tailored to a specific audience, eg, a potential employer or faculty member.⁵

• THE FOUR Ps + ONE

The business community is aware of the 4 Ps of marketing: product, promotion, price, and position. You are the *product* that you are trying to sell! What are your features and benefits?¹³ Have you documented them within the context of your portfolio? You are like-

TABLE 1**Portfolio Components**

Item	Purpose	Example
Professional credentials	Documents credentials	Nursing licenses, state board exam scores
Certification	Documents extended credentials	Description, requirements, expiration date, recertification requirements and supporting data
Professional organizations	Continuous learning and committee work	Name and purpose, offices head
Job description	Documents progression of increasing responsibilities	Head nurse, nurse manager, Clinician II
Performance appraisals	Documents performance	360-degree performance appraisals, periodic assessments
Academic transcripts	Evidence of graduation and grade point average	Official, sealed transcript or diploma
Clinical validations	Documents continuous learning	Standardized certifications such as CPR and ACLS
Health records	Facilitates entry into practice	Tuberculosis, rubella, hepatitis series
Management accomplishments	Evidence of outcome data, strategic planning experience	Business plan, skills checklists
Inter-hospital accomplishments	Documents collaborative practice, committee work	Summary reports
Publications	Documents communication skills and flexibility to apply such skills in the new work environment	Published articles, citations, abstracts, reprints, in-service handout, teaching tools, translated materials
Presentations	Demonstrates effectiveness as a presenter	Evaluations, summary, copies of slide presentations
Research projects	Evidence of continuous learning, collaboration, and outcomes management	Abstract and amount/source of funding awarded
Distance learning	Evidence of self-directed learning	Course description, core content, transcripts

CPR, cardiopulmonary resuscitation; ACLS, advanced cardiac life support.

wise the primary salesperson selling yourself, so you must be able to *promote* yourself and articulate what you have to offer. Appropriate tools or props may be found within the portfolio. Show initiative and be visible. Actively participate in professional society activi-

ties, write for the *Journal of Infusion Nursing*, present at a program, or chair a committee. By doing so, you add value to your product and enhance your marketability. If you are seeking a new position, *price* is a consideration; know what you are worth in today's

TABLE 2**Portfolio Format**

Section	Purpose	Contents
One	Introduction	Diploma, photo, introductory document, certification and recertification credentials
Two	Showcase professional accomplishments	Presentations, professional society accomplishments, research, awards, publications
Three	Complimentary	Accolades, thank you letters, recommendations
Four	Community service	Community achievements and service, information, photos, news clippings

Data from Napierkowski.¹⁴

competitive healthcare environment. Your uniqueness, specialization, certification, and accomplishments reflect your *position*. In infusion care, you want to be the very best that you can be. The fifth P is *portfolio*—your tool for continued competence across the continuum of your professional career.

• BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

A well-developed portfolio can transcend career and lifestyle changes. Faculty members who have been required to prepare a “book” or “dossier” to be considered for promotion or tenure are familiar with the portfolio concept. Researchers may use this model to track proposals, funding, and publications. Consultants may document business plans, contracts, and assignments. The form may be a file, a 3-ring binder, or another repository. Regardless of the format chosen, your portfolio is a reflection of you as a professional. It may be the deciding factor in winning an INS or INCC award, committee appointment, or ballot position. Consider it your blueprint for the future!

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