



OJNI

## EDITOR COLUMN

# Future Thoughts Now

### Senior Editor Column: Future Thoughts Now

**W. Scott Erdley, DNS, RN**  
Associate Professor, St. John Fisher College  
Simulation Educational Specialist  
University at Buffalo  
Email: [scott.erdley@gmail.com](mailto:scott.erdley@gmail.com)



I would like to start off this inaugural column noting I am very flattered to be a part of OJNI. Thank you for the invitation! By way of background let me also note I have been involved since the early 1990's with nursing, and now health informatics. I developed an interest in 'the future' about 7 years ago at NI'03. A colleague and friend, Dr. P. Murray, conspired with me to explore and investigate this topic. It remains an interest, more than passing, to this day. It is hard, though, to explore the future without carrying some luggage along from ones' past.

In any event, one way to approach the future is as an actual and real environment, not from today looking towards the future, but

'swapping' places if-you-will so the future is today and today is the past. This perspective was introduced to me, in the middle of this inaugural decade of the new millennium, via an article I found in a trade journal authored by Prof. Simon Eastel (2005). It is a refreshing and different approach to considering the future, and more importantly, the future of healthcare. I also anticipate drawing on related material from the 2006 post-NI conference (Murray, Park, Erdley, & Kim, 2007) as well as other assorted content related to the future of healthcare and or nursing / health informatics. The column format will vary from interviews of famous future persons to discussions and editorials from future publications to guest columns by those within and without nursing/health informatics. All in all I hope to invoke

**Citation:** Erdley, S. (October, 2010). Future Thoughts Now. *Online Journal of Nursing Informatics (OJNI)*, 14 (3). Available at [http://ojni.org/14\\_3/Erdley.pdf](http://ojni.org/14_3/Erdley.pdf)



# OJNI

## EDITOR COLUMN

questions, thoughts and ideas as you read this column, which I invite you to send to me.

**B**y way of introduction to this topic a short review of Dr. Easteal's article (mentioned above) is provided. Interestingly this article starts from 50 years in the future, a more distant future than some offer. The lead talker, Pythe Desmothenes, recounts the growth and or evolution of health over the past years, noting the highlights and low points of this growth. Of particular note is healthcare improvement was driven, not by physician/medical model along with big pharma, but instead by technologists and the new media. Mergers and or consolidation was the common practice with, for instance, Google and Amazon joining forces to provide a health care organization able to reach and care for patients with a large amount of resources at hand. This merger ultimately led to the demise of Microsoft. Standards for digital health records were not determined until late in the 2020's, either. Pythe continues on to describe the rise of patients as the ultimate determiners of their own health future and how this shift directed their providers to come along with this digitalization of their personal health information. Ultimately the involvement of patients in research led to reward and reconstruction of healthcare to the point of

patient active involvement leading to improved health, longer lives, and the demise of all but a few specialized hospitals.

A second perspective is the one employed at the post-conference of NI'06 (Murray, Park, Erdley, & Kim, 2007). At this conference the invited participants were divided into groups. Each group was given a particular topical focus related to changes in healthcare along with a time frame of 15 years in the future (2020). Each group of participants explored how their topic (social, political, technical) would affect healthcare, and nursing, in these next years. Some perceived the future in more radical terms, for example, there may not be nurses providing patient care. The nurse, as is perceived today, is envisioned to evolve into an information or knowledge worker versus a care coordinator and provider of today. There may in fact still be nurses (RNs) in place but their role will substantially shift from what it was to what it will be, aka – information/knowledge worker. The role will involve much more coordination and assistance with knowledge than today. Additionally patients will be able to select one's provider; patients and providers will be contracted employers and employees. The patient will ultimately be in charge of their care with the ability to hire and or fire their provider.



## EDITOR COLUMN

And so I leave you with the question – what  
will YOUR future be?

Thank you!

Feel free to email your opinion or thoughts  
on this topic.

Scott

### References

Estel, S. (2005). *View from the future*. Retrieved from [http://www.bio-itworld.com/BioIT\\_Article.aspx?id=43926&terms=view++future+may+2005](http://www.bio-itworld.com/BioIT_Article.aspx?id=43926&terms=view++future+may+2005)

Murray, P. J., Park, H. A., Erdley, W. S., & Kim, J. (Eds.). (2007). *Nursing informatics 2020: Towards defining our own future*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: IOS Press.