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“In an AI-driven world, ‘prompt literacy’, is nursing’s new superpower”

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Digital and technology

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“Nurses must engage with AI as a partner in care, framing questions to make its recommendations safe, personalised and effective”

[Author details] Full name(s), job title, organisation

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[Excerpt for website] – Max 150 characters (including spaces). Excerpt should include the author’s name plus brief mention of what the article is about

Melanconia Duval-Pazzaglia on how in the AI era, ‘prompt literacy’ is the skill that all nurses need

(I appreciate my name is long, happy for first name to me shorten to Mel but I would like my surname to be in full)

The NHS is already using artificial intelligence (AI) in ways that would have seemed impossible just five years ago. Algorithms predict which patients are likely to become frequent A&E users, enabling proactive interventions that cut attendances dramatically.

Radiologists work alongside AI that can detect early-stage cancers in scans.

Administrative teams use AI to streamline scheduling and reduce bureaucracy.

The next step is already in sight: AI systems sophisticated enough to provide real-time clinical decision support, analyse complex patient data instantly and suggest evidence-based treatment tailored to each patient. When that technology becomes routine - and current NHS pilots suggest it is close - the nurses who thrive will be those who know how to ask the right questions.

The ability to ask AI systems the right questions, in the right way, to get the most accurate, relevant and useful output, is known as 'prompt literacy'. This is not about 'talking to computers'; rather it's the evolution of skills nurses already use every day, like assessment, critical thinking and therapeutic communication, but adapted for a digital, AI-enhanced world. **In an increasingly AI-driven world, the art of asking, or prompt literacy, is nursing's new superpower [added. OK? yes].**

For generations, nursing education rewarded those who could memorise drug calculations, recall symptoms perfectly and follow protocols flawlessly. We were taught to fear asking questions in case it made us look unprepared. Success meant having the right answers.

In the AI era, that model no longer serves us. AI can recall and process information far faster than humans. The nurses who **thrive [OK? yes]** will be those who engage with AI as a partner in care, framing questions in such a way as to make its recommendations safer, more personalised and more effective.

Imagine a nurse using an AI clinical decision support system for a patient with chest pain. The traditional input would be "Patient reports 8/10 chest pain". Compare this with the prompt literacy input: "This 72-year-old diabetic patient presents with sudden-onset chest pain, rated 8/10, with nausea and sweating. He has a cardiac history and is on multiple medications. What are the most critical assessments and immediate interventions to prioritise?"

The first tells the system something it already knows; the second prompts it to synthesise relevant data and generate a more nuanced, actionable response.

Another example relates to medication alerts. A nurse receiving a generic “check dosage” message might **not enquire further [OK? yes]**. A prompt-literate nurse might ask: “Considering the patient’s renal function, cultural beliefs about medication and recent adverse reactions, what alternatives meet the patient’s clinical and personal needs?” That could change the care plan entirely.

Prompt literacy is not a gimmick. It directly improves: clinical decision-making by combining AI’s processing power with nursing judgment; personalised care by prompting systems to account for cultural, social and preference-based factors; patient education by requesting tailored, literacy-level-appropriate materials rather than generic leaflets; and professional growth by using AI as a teaching partner to test knowledge and explore case studies. **[style of clinical comments is not to have bullet points got it, thank you]**

Far from replacing compassion, AI can enhance it. Research shows that when technology handles routine data tasks, healthcare professionals have more time for direct patient interaction and report higher job satisfaction (Topol, 2019). Like the stethoscope, AI extends our reach, but it’s still the nurse’s skill that makes the difference.

You don’t need advanced tech skills to develop this competency. Start with habits you can build into daily practice. First, give context by describing patient scenarios in detail, including medical history, current status and personal factors. Second, ask layered questions, don’t settle for questions with a “yes/no” response or another single answer **[check edits – yes approved]**. Third, test recommendations by comparing AI suggestions with your own assessment. Fourth, share prompts by discussing effective questions with

colleagues during handovers or teaching sessions. Lastly, stay critical by always considering whether the AI output fits the patient's unique situation.

The UK government is investing in AI adoption across the NHS, and clinical decision support systems are already embedded in many electronic health records. The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) has highlighted digital capabilities as essential for future practice (NMC, 2024).

Developing prompt literacy is more than career development, it's about safeguarding professional autonomy and ensuring AI serves patients, not the other way around. Nurses who master this skill will lead the integration of technology in ways that protect human judgment and uphold nursing values.

The challenge is not whether AI will change nursing. It already has. It is whether we will actively shape that change to strengthen our profession.

The future of nursing will not be defined by who has all the answers, but by who can ask the right questions of patients, of colleagues, and of AI.

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