scope
Contemporary Research Topics

health & wellbeing 10

November 2026

Reflection

https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.3010009

A LIGHT BULB MOMENT: FROM CURIOSITY TO CONTRIBUTION IN MY DIGITAL HEALTH JOURNEY AS A NOVICE NURSING ACADEMIC

Yoonah Cho

Published by Otago Polytechnic Press.

CC-BY the authors.
© illustrations: the artists or other copyright owners or as indicated.

Reflection https://doi.org/10.34074/scop.3010009

A LIGHT BULB MOMENT: FROM CURIOSITY TO CONTRIBUTION IN MY DIGITAL HEALTH JOURNEY AS A NOVICE NURSING ACADEMIC

Yoonah Cho

INTRODUCTION

In 2025, I was still relatively new to academia, having left clinical practice only a year earlier. As a nursing lecturer involved in developing new curriculum content, I recognised that digital health is a rapidly evolving area of healthcare which required immediate attention. Digital health encompasses the use of digital technologies to support healthcare delivery, improve health outcomes, and enhance the experiences of patients and healthcare professionals. I could see potential for growth in this field, not only for the healthcare system but also for my own professional development.

At the time, I was exploring current literature to better understand how digital health could be integrated into nursing education. During this process I encountered both international and New Zealand evidence highlighting the urgent need to prepare nursing graduates for practice in increasingly digital healthcare environments (Kleib et al., 2024; Sadd et al., 2024). Both papers emphasised the importance of digital health knowledge and competencies for safe, high-quality nursing practice. Reading them reinforced my responsibility as a nursing lecturer to prepare future nurses for the realities of modern healthcare and to keep pace with the rapid evolution of digital health. It was a real light-bulb moment for me.

When I learned that Digital Health Week NZ (DHWNZ) 2025 was being held, I saw this as a real-world opportunity to expand my knowledge and understanding of digital health; not only as a nurse but as an academic. Attending DHWNZ 2025 felt like a natural next step in that journey. I was grateful to receive support from the School of Nursing, which enabled me to attend and encouraged my growing interest in this area. As a first-time attendee, I arrived eager to learn, connect with others, and absorb as much knowledge as possible. I was excited about the insights and experiences I could bring back to my teaching and professional practice. Little did I know that attending DHWNZ 2025 would open doors to opportunities, networks, and experiences that would significantly shape my professional journey.

CONFERENCE DETAILS

- Conference: Digital Health Week NZ 2025
- Organiser: Health Informatics New Zealand
- Theme: *Action for Impact: Digital Health Shaping the Future of Care Today*
- Location: Ōtautahi Christchurch
- Dates: 24–27 November 2025
- Attendance: More than 1,100 delegates.



HiNZ DHWNZ 2025 at Te Pae Convention Centre, Ōtautahi Christchurch. Photograph: Author.

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

The conference opened with a mihi whakatau followed by a welcome from Health Informatics New Zealand (HiNZ) CEO Scott Arrol and HiNZ Board Chair Kyle Forde. This conference also marked the 25th anniversary of HiNZ. The conference theme, *Action for Impact: Digital Health Shaping the Future of Care Today*, brought together people with a passion for and interest in digital health across Aotearoa New Zealand. This included many of the current and future leaders in the field. The first keynote speaker was Dame Helen Stokes-Lampard, Chief Medical Officer of Health New Zealand. She highlighted that technology alone will not transform healthcare and that clinical leadership, a clear vision, shared communication, and interdisciplinary collaboration are essential to achieving meaningful change. The Hon Simeon Brown, Minister of Health, announced the launch of HealthX, highlighting the importance of digital transformation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) innovation in healthcare, including the rollout of AI scribes to support frontline clinicians nationwide. Other keynote speakers included Morag McDowell, Health and Disability Commissioner, the Hon Matt Doocey, Associate Minister of Health, and speakers from a range of professional backgrounds, including leadership and personal development, who shared messages centred on possibilities rather than barriers.

Throughout the conference, presentations showcased how digital technologies are transforming healthcare through improved access to care, connected health information systems, consumer empowerment, and the growing use of AI in practice. The speakers challenged delegates to think boldly, embrace innovation, and recognise the potential each of us has to contribute to meaningful change within healthcare.

KEY LEARNING THEMES

Of all the sessions I attended during the conference, one of the most memorable was "Nothing About Us Without Us: Disabled People Leading the Digital Future" (HiNZ, 2025) by Debbie Hughes from the New Zealand Disability Support Network. In this session, Hughes shared a powerful message that made me rethink my understanding of disability and inclusion in digital

health. She presented examples of how digital health tools, often celebrated as positive innovations, can unintentionally create barriers for people with disability because they were not involved in the design process from the beginning. Instead of improving health consumer experiences, these tools can create new challenges that exclude people with disabilities from fully participating in their own care. The way I understood her message was that it is like these people being invited to a party but being unable to get through the front door. Her message challenged delegates to consider who benefits from digital health innovation and highlighted the importance of including people with disabilities in the design process to ensure technologies are accessible, inclusive, and fit for purpose. This made me stop and think. As we continue to innovate healthcare, are we leaving anyone behind? How can we develop digital health without widening the digital divide and existing inequities? What is my role in this space? Hughes' presentation also made me reflect on my role as a nursing lecturer and how I can help students consider disability inclusion when discussing health inequities and digital health innovation.

Another valuable session was "Empowering Future Nurses: Innovation as a Catalyst for Confidence, Collaboration, and Career Identity" (HiNZ, 2025) by Kat Vakavosaki and Samantha Heath from the University of Waikato. Kat shared how undergraduate nursing students at the University of Waikato collaborated with computer science students to develop a medication management device *Medit*. This was designed to support older adults living independently with their medication management. What stood out to me was the collaboration between disciplines and how innovation was embedded within undergraduate education. The research findings demonstrated that nursing students can play an active role in developing technology-enabled solutions to healthcare challenges, rather than simply being end users of technology. The session showed how their clinical perspectives can contribute to improved health outcomes through interdisciplinary collaboration. It also highlighted that exposing students to practical digital health solutions before registration can help them develop confidence and prepare them to become future leaders in healthcare. This resonated with me as a nursing lecturer and made me reflect on how we can create similar opportunities for our own students to engage with innovation and digital health during their nursing education.

IMPACT ON MY TEACHING PRACTICE

It has been almost nine months since I attended DHWNZ 2025 and I realise how much I have grown professionally in less than a year. This conference had an enormous influence on my growing interest in digital health. It was a catalyst that motivated me to explore ways of strengthening digital health within nursing education as a novice nursing academic.

I returned from the conference with a desire to become more involved in this space and several goals. One of these was to teach students transferable skills rather than focusing on individual technologies. As digital tools continue to evolve rapidly, graduates will encounter different systems depending on where they work. Therefore, it is important that students develop the skills, critical thinking, and adaptability required to work confidently in a range of digital healthcare environments. To support this development, I have introduced discussions with students about digital professionalism, digital ethics, and the responsible use of AI. I have also provided opportunities for students to design their own digital health solutions to develop their understanding of digital health capabilities and principles. Additionally, I have begun engaging with key stakeholders to explore opportunities for students to gain exposure to electronic medication

management systems to help them build confidence in using digital technologies within clinical practice. As my knowledge and interest in this area have developed, I have been invited to contribute to curriculum development for the Bachelor of Nursing Year 3 programme, with a particular focus on digital health.

Professional leadership and contribution

Another goal was to become involved in national conversations about supporting current and future nurses in developing competence in digital health. At the time of the conference, this felt ambitious. I was relatively new to academia and had only recently begun exploring digital health. However, the event encouraged me to step outside my comfort zone and connect with experts working in this field. As a result of attending the conference and expanding my network through DHWNZ 2025, I reached out to members of the HiNZ Nursing and Midwifery Informatics Special Interest Group (HiNZ-NMI), expressing my interest in becoming involved in future initiatives. The first step in this journey was joining the HiNZ-NMI Executive Committee in 2026. At the start of this year, I was invited by the authors of the updated *Guidelines: Digital Health for Nurses in Aotearoa New Zealand Entering Practice* (Collins et al., 2026) to join the advisory group supporting its review and development. This was my first opportunity to contribute to a nationally recognised piece of work. It gave me a voice as a nursing lecturer in conversations about the future direction of digital health in nursing and how these New Zealand guidelines may be translated into curriculum and practice.

I have also contributed feedback on the gaps in digital health and AI literacy, through the School of Nursing, to the consultation on proposed revisions to the Nursing Council of New Zealand Code of Conduct for nurses. Additionally, I joined the Otago Polytechnic AI Steering Committee, where I continue to participate in discussions regarding the development of institutional guidance on the use of AI and assessment design within this new educational paradigm.

The conference reinforced my role as a nursing lecturer in preparing future nurses with the digital health literacy required for contemporary practice. The work I have since become involved in has inspired me to share current discussions about AI in nursing and tertiary education, and how we can prepare graduates to work safely, ethically, and confidently alongside emerging technologies. As a result of the knowledge, confidence, and opportunities gained since attending DHWNZ 2025, I submitted an abstract for DHWNZ 2026, which has been accepted for presentation. Attending the conference as a learner and returning the following year as a presenter feels like a significant milestone in my digital health journey and an opportunity to contribute back to the digital health community.

Ongoing professional learning and networks

Less than a year later, I have already achieved some of the goals I set following the conference. While many goals remain a work in progress, I continue to explore current literature, emerging evidence, and best practice approaches to better understand how digital health capabilities can be meaningfully embedded within nursing education.

Beyond these professional achievements, one of the greatest benefits of attending the conference was the chance to connect with people who share a passion for digital health. Through these connections, I have built networks, gained inspiration, and discovered opportunities that I would not have encountered otherwise. I have also actively engaged in digital health discussions through

professional networks such as LinkedIn, particularly around AI in healthcare and education. More recently, I have been following the work of Delaney La Rosa and reading *Nursing Education in the AI Era: Practical Guidance for Educators to Advance Equitable Care* (La Rosa et al., 2026), which is continuing to shape my thinking about the role of AI in nursing education.

CONCLUSION

Looking back, the conference theme *Action for Impact: Digital Health Shaping the Future of Care Today* accurately reflects my experience. The conference did not simply increase my knowledge of digital health; it motivated me to 'take action.' What began as an interest in understanding digital health has developed into active involvement in digital health education, AI discussions, curriculum development, professional networks, and national conversations about the future of nursing practice.

I can confidently say that this conference changed my practice as a nursing lecturer. Digital health and AI are no longer conversations about the future. They are part of the healthcare environment that nurses, educators, and students are working within today. As healthcare continues to evolve, digital health literacy must become everyone's business. All healthcare professionals need a basic understanding of digital health, not just those working in informatics or technology-focused roles.

DHWNZ 2025 demonstrated that successful digital transformation requires more than technology alone. It requires collaboration, leadership, innovation, and a commitment to ensuring that no one is left behind. The conference challenged me to think differently about healthcare, education, disability inclusion, and the role of AI in practice. It also provided practical opportunities to contribute to national conversations and become part of the growing digital health community in Aotearoa New Zealand.

For healthcare professionals, educators, and students who are interested in understanding how digital health is shaping the future of care, I would highly recommend attending a future HiNZ DHWNZ conference. The knowledge gained, the connections made, and the opportunities created extend far beyond the conference itself. Most importantly, the conference reminded me not to doubt my ability to contribute. For those early in their academic or professional journey, I hope my experience demonstrates where curiosity, openness to learning, and a willingness to engage can lead. We all have the potential to be leaders in digital health, and meaningful change often begins with taking the first step into a conversation.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge the support of the School of Nursing, Otago Polytechnic, for providing funding to attend DHWNZ 2025. The author also acknowledges the mentorship and support of Otago Polytechnic School of Nursing kaimahi, which helped expand their research interest in digital health.

Conflict of interest statement

The author is a member of HiNZ and currently serves as an executive member of the HiNZ-NMI. These affiliations did not influence the content of this report.

AI statement

Microsoft Copilot was used to assist with manuscript editing, proofreading, and refinement of writing. All reflections, interpretations, and content are the author's own.

Yoonah Cho (https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4050-4755) is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Nursing at Otago Polytechnic. She is an EdTech Champion, a member of the Otago Polytechnic AI Steering Committee, and an executive member of the Health Informatics New Zealand Nursing & Midwifery Informatics Special Interest Group (HiNZ-NMI).

REFERENCES

Collins, E., Britnell, S., & Honey, M. (2026). *Guidelines: Digital health for nurses in Aotearoa New Zealand entering practice* (2nd ed). https://doi.org/10.82348/our-archive.00250

Health Informatics New Zealand. (2025). *Digital Health Week NZ 2025: From the stage 2025*. https://www.hinz.org.nz/resource/resmgr/special-reports/events/DHWNZ2025-Post-Conference-Re.pdf

Kleib, M., Arnaert, A., Nagle, L. M., Ali, S., Idrees, S., da Costa, D., Kennedy, M., & Darko, E. M. (2024). Digital health education and training for undergraduate and graduate nursing students: Scoping review. *JMIR Nursing, 7*, Article e58170. https://doi.org/10.2196/58170

La Rosa, D. W., Sumpter, D. F., Carlisle, S., & Beard, K. V. (Eds.). (2026). *Nursing education in the AI era: Practical guidance for educators to advance equitable care.* Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-12402-9

Sadd, R., Collins, E., & Honey, M. (2024). Supporting digital health integration in a national curriculum: The New Zealand experience. In G. Strudwick, N. R. Hardiker, G. Rees, R. Cook & Y. J. Lee (Eds.), *Innovation in applied nursing informatics* (pp. 488–493). IOS Press. https://doi.org/10.3233/SHTI240197