Selection Process and the Role of Nursing

The installation of a clinical information system does not just happen, nor is it a mysterious process. The process starts with identifying a need, conducting a feasibility analysis, creating a selection team who gathers information and develops vision and goals, promoting executive buy-in and funding commitments. After a clear vision and goals are identified, a request for proposal (RFP) is sent out to the vendor field. Vendor responses are evaluated, site visits and on-site vendor fairs are arranged, and the system selection decision is made. While the contract is being negotiated, funding is confirmed and an implementation team is formed. The implementation team configures the system, deploys it to users, and evaluates and maintains the system. This entire process from initial idea to deployment is summarized in Figure 14.1.

A clinical system implementation provides nursing the opportunity to help clinical staff optimize their workflow and improve patient care by harnessing technology and using it to advantage. A system implementation project marks its beginning from its earliest conception, perhaps a clinician with an idea inspired to find a better way to solve workflow issues, reduce errors, or improve patient outcomes. As the idea develops, buy-in from senior leadership and the executive level formalizes the project. Although the selection process may appear lengthy, it serves multiple purposes, such as engaging all potential users, promoting buy-in and ensuring that all embrace the same shared vision (Hunt et al., 2004). Depending on the experience level and knowledge of the staff working on a particular implementation, this process can be abbreviated for smaller projects (Hunt et al., 2004). Through thoughtful, deliberate information gathering, analysis, and decision making, a system that enhances clinician decision making, optimizes staff work, and improves patient care will be selected and implemented. It is imperative that

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nursing be actively involved at every stage of the process from beginning to end (Hunt et al., 2004; Manning and McConnell, 1997; Mills, 1995).

Once the need for a system has been identified, the initial step is to form a selection team to choose the solution. The formation of the selection team committee depends on how the organization typically handles projects and committees. This committee is usually composed of various department heads or designates (including nursing) in the organization, but it can and should include other disciplines as needed. It is important to identify all of the organizational departments that will be affected by the system installation and ensure that their interests are adequately represented. Membership can include both permanent and ad hoc representation of the core group of users (Hunt et al., 2004). Communication mechanisms must be made more formal as the size of the group grows to ensure effective meetings and to keep the