

# Val Cartmel

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Timely and accurate health information is critical to modern nursing practice. Val Cartmel has been a pioneer in the field of health informatics, helping implement systems that optimize health services for British Columbians. She has undertaken a different path than most nurses, with temporary transitions into other kinds of professional development, but has ultimately provided an example to inspire and inform her nursing colleagues. As she once described her driving motivation for her specialty, it's about "making sure that technology supports practice, and not the other way around."

Longtime nursing colleague Barb Cross, RN, knows Val as an innovative person who knows how to push the boundaries to create positive change. "She's willing to break free from traditional methods of nursing practice and embrace technology-enabled solutions to support nursing care. These help us better understand how nurses contribute to health outcomes of the families we serve."

That willingness to push boundaries has allowed her to explore a spectrum of career options both in nursing and in operations and health care leadership. She began as a registered nurse in the recovery room at Lions Gate Hospital as a brand-new graduate. She later became a Clinical Systems Coordinator at North Shore Health Region before becoming a Patient Access Manager, regional hospital manager and ultimately a Professional Practice consultant in informatics.

"Val is very much respected for the work she does in all areas of nursing leadership, but particularly, in the area of professional practice and informatics," says B.C. Ambulance Service Executive Director Leanne Heppell. Indeed, Val "wrote the book" on health informatics early on when she wrote B.C.'s first curriculum on computers in nursing.

Implementing the Medical Reconciliation project at VCH was another huge accomplishment, ultimately helping nursing staff deliver higher-quality care amid different team cultures. As Clinical Practice Improvement Leader with VCH, she provided visible leadership throughout the province, visiting nurses in Squamish, Whistler, Pemberton, Sechelt and Powell River, imparting knowledge and advice in a hands-on manner when videoconferencing wasn't good enough. "Educators often sought out her advice," notes Romilda Ang, RN.

Going beyond teaching informatics implementation and clinical practice, Val has had an even closer role in supporting other nurses in their professional development, helping them feel a sense of pride in their knowledge and experience, supporting their attendance at professional events, helping them submit papers or abstracts and helping them network with other nurses.

VCH Executive Director Vivian Eliopoulos says "time and again, I have seen Val mentor other nurses who are pursuing their passion"—a passion that Val has demonstrated herself, throughout her career.

Val also provided exemplary service to CRNBC for more than 15 years as a highly committed volunteer. For many years, Val was actively engaged with the North Shore chapter and as a voting delegate to RNABC Annual Meetings. From 2002–2010, she served in a variety of progressively more responsible roles with the College, culminating in her term as President. She also represented the College on the Board of the Canadian Nurses Association from 2007–2009. "Volunteer roles, such as those Val took on with the College, require significant personal commitment and sacrifice," says Laurel Brunke, RN, former CRNBC Registrar & CEO. "Val took on all responsibilities without hesitation, and acted with integrity at all times."



AWARD OF DISTINCTION

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