Background/Significance: National nursing organizations have called upon nursing education to provide an inclusive curriculum for all students, with and without disabilities. Nurse educators can meet diverse learning needs by encouraging the use of assistive technology (AT) in academic and clinical settings. AT provides a means to access course content, materials, assessments, assignments, and environments; benefiting all students. Postsecondary education, business, marketing, computer science, architectural disciplines and the office of disabilities support the use of AT by students and consumers. Many AT devices and software are readily available, but not identified, explained, or applied in the nursing education literature.

Purpose: The aim of the integrative review was to answer the question: What is the state of assistive technology in nursing education?

Methodology: CINAHL, ERIC, Proquest, and Web of Science databases were searched using a combination of keyword phrases ("nursing student," "disable*," and "assistive technology* and "accommodations") from January 2008 and January 2015. Inclusion criteria included: (1) published studies, integrative or literature reviews (2) literature pertaining to nursing students with disabilities and/or diverse learning styles; and, (3) specifically stated type of AT or accommodation used by the student or universal design for learning.

Sample: A total of 81 articles were extracted from the databases and duplicates were removed. Articles were evaluated against the inclusion criteria and 10 articles were advanced for the review (1 quantitative, 3 qualitative, 2 mixed-method and; 4 featured articles).


Results/Outcomes: Themes of assistive technology such as content, assistive technology laws and terms, and assistive technology barriers and supports were extracted from the literature identifying the state of assistive technology in nursing education. Nurse educators’ and students’ lack of knowledge of AT was a reported barrier. Nurse educators desired in-services to support students with disabilities in multiple teaching environments including, the use of effective inclusive teaching strategies in the classroom and clinical settings (UDI and AT), more experiences with students with disabilities, and increased collaboration with the Office of Disabilities.

Conclusions/Implications: To address the call for more diversity and inclusivity in nursing education, barriers to learning environments for students with disabilities need to be reduced. AT helps students with disabilities and students with diverse ways of learning. AT is not well known in nursing education. The use of AT for the learning needs of all students requires further research, application and dissemination in nursing education to teach a broader population of diverse learners.