Objectives. The aim of the study is to determine the effects of IT on the delivery of nursing care as experienced by registered and enrolled nurses working in the hospital setting.

Methods. A quantitative comparative descriptive design was used in this study. The delivery of nursing care in a hospital which uses a computer-based documentation system for patient care was compared with a hospital which uses a paper-based documentation system. The participants in this study were registered and enrolled nurses working in the wards and units of the two selected hospitals. Data was collected through the administration of a questionnaire directed at the registered and enrolled nurses in the two hospitals involved in the study.

Results. Information technology did not decrease the use of unauthorised abbreviations. It also did not improve the time nursing care was rendered being reflected in nursing documentation. Errors being made when entering patient data from, for example, cardiac monitors, intravenous pumps or results to investigations into the patient’s record were not decreased by IT. Furthermore, IT failed to improve nurses being alerted to drug interactions and to contra-indications of prescribed medications. There were a few instances where IT had a negative effect on the delivery of nursing care. Information technology increased the need to copy the same data when creating and updating a nursing care plan as well as documenting nursing care. Although the need for taking telephonic orders was reduced through the use of IT, it was found that when nurses in the hospital with a computer-based documentation system took telephonic orders, errors were made more often than when nurses in the hospital with a paper-based documentation system took telephonic orders.

Conclusion. This study revealed that IT positively affected the experiences of nurses with the delivery of nursing care, with only a few exceptions.