

May 7-13, 2007

National Nursing Week

Heart of health care

Compassion, knowledge make nurses vital part of system

National Nursing Week presents an opportunity to celebrate the unique contributions of nurses – both as a profession and individually.

“Travelling across this country, I have met many inspirational nurses who are making a difference every day,” says Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) president Marlene Smadu. This year’s event runs from May 7-13.

World-wide celebration

National Nursing Week is celebrated around the world in conjunction with Florence Nightingale’s birthday, May 12. Nightingale is considered the pioneer of modern nursing.

services.

For example, it was Lois Scott, a registered nurse, who co-developed and championed telehealth. Telehealth, from its roots in New Brunswick, has taken off so that Canadians no matter where they live can access expert health advice around the clock through nurse-staffed telephone services. Telehealth has helped drastically reduce the number of visits

to emergency departments across the country.

True to its pioneering history, nursing continues to chart the course in optimizing the health of all Canadians. This means counselling and advocacy aimed at preventing illness to keep Canadians healthy and out of hospitals.

Jane Brownrigg is an example.

The public health nurse in Ottawa works with teens in battling tobacco addiction. An advocate for smoke-free public spaces., Brownrigg and her colleagues pressured the municipal council in Ottawa to put in place a smoke-free bylaw in 2001.

Nurses also work with governments at all levels as well as urban designers to reduce environmental hazards. They collaborate with police officers, firefighters and others involved in emergency planning to ensure that, at the time of an epidemic or a natural disaster, the expertise and infrastructure are there to deal with people who have physical and mental health problems.

According to Christine Halpert, registered nurse and communicable disease manager at Fraser Health in British Columbia, nurses have a unique set of skills that allow them to mobilize quickly in the face of any kind of an outbreak because they know their communities well. Halpert feels nurses are able to

identify people who might be at risk of infection early and can prevent or stop the further spread of illness like meningococcal disease outbreaks or influenza.

Nurses are no strangers to the value of working in teams. With nutritionists, pharmacists, physicians, physiotherapists and others, nurses deliver health services in clinics, long-term care facilities, hospitals and people’s homes. They have a long history of involvement in social issues like homelessness and healthy child development.

Toronto street nurse Cathy Crowe, for instance, has devoted her life to working on behalf of homeless Canadians, including advocating for a national housing program.

“We often hear how nurses are at the heart of health care,” says the CNA’s Smadu. “I think that has two meanings: it means that our compassion connects us with patients in a heart-to-heart way, and it recognizes that the health system could not function without our knowledge and actions.

“National Nursing Week is an opportunity to acknowledge the many contributions of registered nurses in their varied roles. We invite you to take a closer look at nursing.”

To find out more about National Nursing Week, visit: www.cna-aiic.ca.

On the job



RN Luisa Rotulo, who benefited from a new provincial government funding initiative for nurses, goes over the health history of heart patient Gary Bedard at Hotel-Dieu-Grace Hospital. See pg. C8.

- Ed Goodfellow: Special to The Star



Premier Dalton McGuinty looks on as Mary Ferguson-Paré, president of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, addresses the group’s annual general meeting last month in Toronto. Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman was also at the event.

Anesthesia care gets a big boost

How to reduce the wait times for surgical procedures is an issue that hospitals have wrestled with to little avail due to a shortage of anesthesiologists in Ontario.

This past March, however, the provincial government announced the creation of “Anesthesia Care Teams” and a revised role for anesthesia-related health care workers.

The initiative will mean that nurse practitioners trained in anesthesia and assistants will help the anesthesiologist during surgeries. Nurse practitioners-anesthesia are registered nurses with advanced preparation at a Master’s level who will take part in the provision of anaesthesia care.

Anesthesia assistants are trained health professionals who provide technical and operational support to the anesthesiologist. “The creation of Anesthesia Care Teams is an innovative approach that helps address the shortage of anesthesiologists in Ontario as we maximize the skills and experience of trained professionals to provide greater surgical support,” George Smitherman, the province’s health and long term care minister, said in announcing the initiative.



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- DORIS GRINSUPN

“We are absolutely delighted that registered nurses will be able to advance their skills and knowledge in anesthesia care and participate within the team in this new role in Canada,”

says Doris Grinspun, executive director of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO). “It is excellent for patients because it will reduce wait times and increase access to surgical care.”

Grinspun says nurse practitioners-anesthesia will be working wherever there is a need for anesthesia care – “before surgery in preparation, during surgery in the administration of anesthesia, and after the surgery in monitoring and in dispensing pain management.

“Nurses are eager to increase their contribution to improved health care access for all Ontarians,” she adds.

Anesthesia Care Teams were created as part of the government’s HealthForceOntario Health Human Resources Strategy. They grew out of recommendations made by the joint Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and the Ontario Medical Association Operative Anesthesia Committee (OAC).

PLEASE SEE PILOT /C8



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THIS NATIONAL NURSES WEEK, Henry Ford Health System is pleased to honor our nurses, whose many efforts and sacrifices help turn ordinary patient experiences into the extraordinary. Your dedicated service and passion for healing do not go unnoticed, and help to keep our community strong. Thank you for making a difference.

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