Improving Work Life for Nurses: Some Progress, But Much to be Done

Friday, July 9, 2004 – In all the talk of improving health care delivery in Canada the shortage of nurses, on whom so much change depends, figures prominently.

Primary among the reasons for the shortage are working conditions. Heavy workloads, long hours, unsafe environments and high stress explain why nurses are among those employees most likely to report that their workplace is unhealthy. They're also reasons why an adequate supply of nurses is not forthcoming.

In August 2002, the Canadian Nursing Advisory Committee (CNAC), set up by the Conference of Deputy Ministers of Health to advise it on implementing the National Nursing Strategy, published its report, *Our Health, Our Future: Creating Quality Workplaces for Canadian Nurses*. The CNAC report detailed 51 recommendations for improving the work life of nurses. A year later, national nursing organizations expressed their unhappiness over the lack of action on those recommendations.

Last winter, the Office of Nursing Policy at Health Canada asked CPRN's Health Network to review progress on implementing the CNAC recommendations with an eye to identifying policy-level factors hindering or helping progress. That report is now available.

Our Health, Our Future: Creating Quality Workplaces for Canadian Nurses – A Progress Report on Implementing the Final Report of the Canadian Nursing Advisory Committee, by Lisa Maslove and Cathy Fooks, is based on a scan of the literature on implementation, a survey of relevant organizations, interviews with key informants and a roundtable to review initial findings.

The report finds signs of improvements in the quality of nursing life, but "these changes are not widespread." It outlines some of the barriers to change, as well as factors that foster it. It concludes that improving the quality of work for nurses should not be seen as distinct from reforms designed to improve the quality of care. Clearly, there are strong positive links between a healthy workplace for nurses, the supply of nurses and the experience of patients.

You can access or download a copy of the report by clicking here.

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Wait Times In The News

Eliminating unreasonable wait times for medical procedures was a hot topic in the recent federal election campaign. We thought we'd remind you of an earlier Health Network report, ***The Taming of the Queue: Wait Time Measurement, Monitoring and Management,*** by Cathy Fooks, which summarizes the discussion and proposals for best practice at a colloquium on the subject, organized by CPRN for the Canadian Medical Association, the Association of Canadian Academic Healthcare Organizations, the Institute of Health Services and Policy Research, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, and the Canadian Institute for Health Information.

You can access or download a copy of Fooks' colloquium report by clicking here.

You can also access other presentations from the colloquium by clicking here.

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