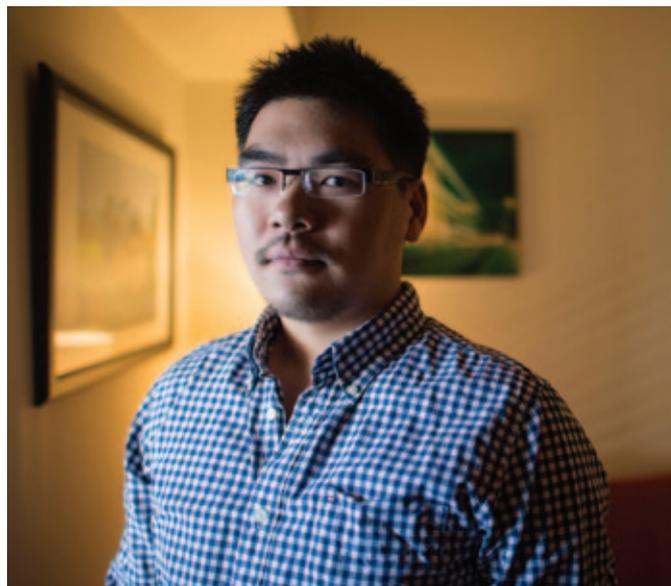


# NURSING IN TH

## Nurses want stability, security at work



Uxbridge RN Mary Beddows wonders if she's going to need a part-time home care nursing job to make ends meet.



As a home care nurse with a fluctuating income, Tom Chang worries about going into debt during those months when work is slow.

A report released by United Way Toronto in February suggests only 60 per cent of workers in the Greater Toronto Area have stable, secure jobs. Home care nurses **Mary Beddows** and **Tom Chang** belong to the 40 per cent who have unstable employment. Their pay is determined by the number of patients they see, but their client visits are often irregular. Uxbridge-based Beddows says she has eight client visits each week, but "...three of them could be gone next week." With that kind of uncertainty, she worries she will need a part-time job to pay the

bills. Beddows takes all the work she is offered, but wonders "...how many clients can I see...without becoming thoroughly exhausted?" Burlington-based Chang "...is constantly worried about going into debt." He says "...last month my income was half of what it was in August." As the sole breadwinner in a two-member household, Chang works evenings because the pay is higher, but says he often doesn't have time to eat. He says there are upsides to his job, such as flexibility, but "(he is) constantly working." (*Toronto Star*, Feb. 23)

### Sharing beliefs over breakfast

Each year, RNAO's Region 10 hosts its *Breakfast with Politicians* so nurses can meet their political representatives to talk about healthy public policy. Retired RN and former RNAO board member **Riek van den Berg** spoke with CFRA's Tom Woodward about the event, and the release

of RNAO's election platform. When Woodward suggested RNAO leans left, van den Berg responded: "We look at it from the perspective of what's needed to improve the health of the people of Ontario. We don't start from left or right." Noting the recommendations in RNAO's platform are pragmatic, Woodward asked van den Berg to

explain how NPs can be better utilized. "The bulk of what we currently ask general practitioners to do is not really within what they should be doing. We're almost wasting their knowledge and expertise," she said, adding "we have a whole group of people we call registered nurses and nurse practitioners who have the

knowledge, skill and expertise to do that." Reflecting on her time as an intensive care RN, she said: "You have to work really closely with all the members of the team...We want to use the best of everyone's knowledge in the health-care system...that way we're going to provide the most efficient and best care for people." (*CFRA Radio*, March 7)

# E NEWS

BY CLAIRE O'KEEFFE

## Calls for inquiry and funding

RNAO CEO **Doris Grinspun** says a tragic death in a Scarborough nursing home was likely “preventable.” In mid-March, a male resident hit a female resident, who later succumbed to her injuries. He also put another in hospital. The man was charged



with second-degree murder and aggravated assault. Grinspun is calling for an independent public investigation by the Ministry of Health and Ontario's coroner. “(The situation) is horrific,” she says. “And in addition to horrific, it's outrageous because I'm afraid it will not be the last tragedy unless something is done.” RNAO wants more funding for registered long-term care nursing staff, which is the first step to deal with the systematic failures that likely led to this and other similar incidents at nursing homes. Statistics Canada confirms that Ontario spends \$155.30 per long-term

care resident, while Quebec spends \$254.30, Saskatchewan \$216.70, and Alberta \$201.80. In an interview with *CTV News*, RNAO President **Rhonda Seidman-Carlson** says most staff in long-term care homes “...are personal support workers who are not supported by enough professional staff.” RNAO is calling for “an increase in regulatory registered nurses – RNs and NPs – so that issues can be addressed immediately,” Seidman-Carlson adds. (*Toronto Star*, March 16) (*CTV News, Close Up*, March 19)

## Free blood pressure readings from RNs

**Rhonda Walsh** was one of several nurses offering on-the-spot blood pressure readings to shoppers at a Kincardine Sobeys during a February in-store clinic to promote awareness of the condition. Walsh says a variety of strategies can be used to keep peoples' blood pressure at an acceptable level. She says “the first thing you (should) do” to manage your health is to check blood pressure levels with your health provider annually. She also advises that people follow a low-fat diet, limit their alcohol intake and avoid cigarettes. Exercising for at least 30 minutes daily and having a waist circumference no more than 40 inches for men (35 inches for women) is also recommended. Walsh warns high blood pressure “...is often referred to as a silent killer” because a lack of awareness can prove deadly. (*Kincardine News*, Feb. 26)

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Following her attendance at a mayor's forum in February, **Sheri Hatcher** wrote to the Owen Sound Sun Times to express her optimism that municipal politicians are open to talking about a recreational and sports agreement again, after negotiations broke down last year. (Feb. 20)

## Please try again

I found it very encouraging and enlightening to hear (the announcement) that the city was receptive to reopening negotiations...particularly when the rates of chronic diseases associated with inactivity and children being overweight are increasing at an alarming rate. As a registered nurse, I see the impact that inactivity has on our youth on a daily basis. The cost to deal with physical and mental illness in the health-care system is enormous, and the outcomes are often devastating. This will only worsen if we create new barriers for children to participate in activity. User fees are a barrier...and will create a tiered system as children from lower socio-economic households may be further excluded from participating because additional fees are financially prohibitive despite subsidization. I encourage all three councils to get back together and renegotiate an agreement that is fair and reasonable; an agreement that is in the best interest of children.

**Sheri Hatcher, Grey-Bruce Chapter**

## RNs support methadone clinic site

“I can't think of a better place,” says **Janet Hunt** of the proposed site for a methadone clinic in London. Hunt, RNAO's Middlesex-Elgin chapter president and an incoming RNAO board member, shared this view at a public debate in February, supporting the proposed location at 527 Wellington Rd. “Having a facility like this within the catchment of a major emergency department, and right across the road from where we will have a mental health

facility...(means) these people can get the help they need as soon as possible,” she says. The public debate was organized by local residents opposed to the location. They say it's unsuitable because of limited parking and proximity to a nearby school. **Deborah Warren**, an RN who works at The Oxford Recovery Clinic (one of five methadone clinics in London), says more than 30,000 people were treated with methadone for opiate addiction in the area in 2009, and the need for this clinic is now greater than ever.

# NURSING IN THE NEWS

## OUT AND ABOUT



### PANEL BEGINS WORK ON ELDER ABUSE BPG

In February, the panel of experts that will help to develop RNAO's new BPG on prevention of elder abuse gathered for its inaugural meeting. Instrumental players include (L to R) retired RN Elizabeth Podnieks, a fierce advocate of elder abuse prevention, Susan Storey McNeill, BPG program manager at RNAO, and Samir Sinha, physician lead for the province's seniors care strategy. Federal funding for the BPG was announced last June 15, *World Elder Abuse Awareness Day*, by Canada's Minister of State for Seniors Alice Wong.



### NURSING STUDENTS GET TIPS FROM RECENT GRADS

In an effort to share their new-found knowledge of nursing in the real world, a group of 12 nursing graduates assembled as panelists on March 2 at Ryerson University. The graduates, hailing from York University, Ryerson University, University of Toronto and Nipissing University, answered questions from current students wondering what to expect as they near completion of the program. Among the panelists (L to R): RNs Amrita Mathur, Emily Pitre, Erin Lough and Jazmyne Kent, Ryerson Professor Nancy Purdy, and RN Sarah Portelli.

"People treated with methadone are able to make changes to their life over time, in a non-judgmental, safe environment," she says. Despite the support, the application for the new clinic was rejected by the city's Planning and Environment Committee. (*CTV News, London, Feb. 19; London Community News, Feb. 20*)

### Backpack shrinks teen's hospital time

Yusuf Hirji, an athletic teenager, was diagnosed with osteosarcoma (bone cancer) last summer, but is happily mobile and out of hospital thanks to an innovative idea proposed by his oncology nurse, **Eleanor Hendershot**. Special backpacks that act as portable

drug-flushing systems are being used by cancer patients in the U.S., Britain and Brazil. Hendershot suggested that Yusuf use one too. She says such portable treatment "...is quite revolutionary." Usually, osteosarcoma patients must undergo as many as four days in hospital after their regular chemotherapy treatments to flush drugs out of the body. The drug-flushing backpack allows Yusuf to remain at home with his family instead of spending extended periods in hospital. Yusuf is the first osteosarcoma patient in Canada to be treated in this way. The last time he went to hospital was January. "The fact that (Yusuf) hasn't been admitted in months is crazy," says Hendershot. (*Toronto Star, March 8*) **RN**

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

In a letter to the Windsor Star, **Jennifer Johnston** encouraged people to petition their local MPs to vote in support of Private Member's Bill C-400, the Secure, Adequate, Accessible and Affordable Housing Act. The Bill, which was meant to impose a procedural requirement on the federal government to create a national housing plan, was eventually defeated in the House of Commons. (Feb. 12)

### Windsor RNs advocate for a national housing plan

We are particularly concerned for our community since we have some of the highest unemployment rates in Canada, and some of the highest social determinants of health in Canada. As members of the Windsor-Essex RNAO chapter, and constituents in your riding, we are writing to ask for MP support of Bill C-400. RNAO was encouraged that MPs from all parties unanimously voted in favour of Motion M-331 this past May (which) affirmed that the government "should keep with Canada's obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the right to adequate housing as guaranteed under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights." Bill C-400 is the next step.

**Jennifer Johnston, Amherstburg**