

NURSING NOTES

Belleville RN is truly “remarkable”

Retired Belleville RN, respected municipal councillor (since 2006), and long-time RNAO member Pat Culhane wants to be clear about just how her nomination – and win – as that city’s most “Remarkable Woman” in November has made her feel. “I want to tell you truthfully, honestly and unequivocally, I am humbled to have this award in the face of the competition,” she said about the honour from local newspaper, *The Belleville Intelligencer*. This year’s 12th annual competition was fierce (Culhane was one of 13 nominees). Her sister was behind the nomination, and says Culhane’s “...life has been lived for others, completely.” A survivor of spousal abuse and cancer, Culhane is an avid volunteer, donating her time to organizations such as the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Humane Society and the Multiple Sclerosis Society.



RNs to begin dispensing medications in January 2014

Four years ago, the provincial government passed a series of amendments to legislation that governs regulated health professionals, and in doing so, opened the door to expanding the scope of practice for RNs and RPNs to include dispensing medications. Recent changes to the *Nursing Act, 1991* mark the final step towards this expanded scope, which comes into effect in January 2014. In the past, nurses could only dispense drugs through delegation. Beginning next year, new regulations authorize RNs to dispense when an order is provided by an authorized practitioner such as a physician or NP. The College of Nurses of Ontario’s (CNO) *Medication practice standard* will be updated to reflect expectations for practice, and to provide nurses with the guidance needed to dispense a drug safely. CNO says its revised practice standard will be available online (www.CNO.org) Jan. 1, 2014. RNAO spent months in 2009 advocating

for these changes to legislation and regulations that oversee the practice of nurses, but expressed disappointment the amendments didn’t go far enough at the time to reduce wait times and improve access.

Canadians open to conversations about end-of-life care

Saint Elizabeth, a national, non-profit health-care provider, is challenging conventional wisdom with the October release of a survey that reveals more than 80 per cent of Canadians are comfortable talking about end-of-life care issues. “This level of readiness will help us have these important conversations with individuals and their families,” says Shirlee Sharkey, the organization’s president and CEO. Conducted by Environics Research, the web-based survey found half of respondents would prefer to receive end-of-life care at home, but most believe it’s offered only in nursing homes, hospitals, hospices and retirement homes. Only one in 10 saw their home as an option.

Although most people want to die at home, there is “tremendous anxiety about how a home death might burden their families,” Sharkey says, “and how their medical treatment would be administered, and even who would pay for it.” Twenty-five per cent of respondents over the age of 30 have made end-of-life plans. Those over 70 are only slightly more prepared, with 40 per cent saying they’ve done some advance planning.

Three RNs and advocates for vulnerable populations receive awards

This fall, three nurses who have focused their careers on vulnerable people (who live on the street and/or who have mental health challenges) were honoured with awards from three different organizations. Kitchener’s Tracey Collins, Toronto’s Cathy Crowe, and London’s Cheryl Forchuk each received recognition for the important work they do and the influence they have had on policies affecting the vulnerable. Collins received a *Kitchener-Waterloo*

Oktoberfest Rogers Women of the Year Award for her work with the city’s homeless through The Working Centre’s psychiatric outreach project. Collins has pioneered a nursing role in non-traditional settings such as community kitchens, in shelters, the courts, parks and drop-in centres. Crowe, an educator, author and film producer who has been a vocal and visible advocate for Toronto’s homeless for many years, was appointed as a distinguished visiting practitioner at Ryerson University, and will help to develop a one- to two-week training course for youth called the *Jack Layton Summer School for Youth Activism*. Forchuk received a *Recovery Research Award* from Psychosocial Rehabilitation Canada for a project she headed that put cell phones in the hands of 400 people struggling with schizophrenia and depression. The devices helped them to track their own triggers and stay out of hospital. **RN**

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