



Values. Evidence. Courage.

AS PREPARATIONS RAMP UP FOR RNAO’s annual general meeting (AGM) and nursing week 2017, I share with excitement the theme our board of directors chose to mark our 92nd anniversary: Values. Evidence. Courage.

These words get to the heart of RNAO’s approach to its work, and to what you as members do day-in and day-out. Our individual and collective values-based leadership and robust evidence give us the courage to speak out on tough and, at times, controversial issues. There are so many examples.

RNAO’s 2012 [Enhancing Community Care for Ontarians \(ECCO\)](#) and 2016 [Mind the Safety Gap in Health System Transformation](#) reports have not been without controversy. Healthy – and sometimes heated – dialogue and debate have resulted from these reports.

Healthy debates on ECCO triggered important health system transformation, including the devolution of CCACs into the LHINs and the plan to relocate into primary care 4,100 CCAC care co-ordinators.

Debates arising out of Mind the Safety Gap led deputy health minister Bob Bell to formally say: “In general, patients classified as having tertiary or quaternary needs, who are in acute care hospitals, would be assessed as requiring registered nursing care. Most cancer patients in acute care hospitals would also fall into this category.” The report also prompted the launch of

interprofessional health human resources plans.

RNAO will never shy away from debate and discussion. In fact, we embrace debate because we know we can all learn from it. And we know it will lead to important changes for nurses and the public.

Our advocacy on the environment, including pushing for the closure of coal plants and for

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cleaner alternatives such as wind power, are further examples of RNAO looking to its values and the evidence to advance sensitive issues. RNAO’s submissions, presentations, action alerts and other forms of public expressions on supervised injection services and assisted dying have gone up against opposition. On these issues, we remained courageous, because our advocacy is founded in values and evidence.

On the pages of this *Journal*, we explore another issue important to registered nurses, nurse practitioners and nursing students: the legalization of cannabis (page 12). The federal government has promised to

introduce legislation this spring to legalize what is currently an illegal substance. Ontarians and nurses have varied opinions on this. But that won’t stop us. Like so many issues before it – and so many that will come down the road – RNAO will open up this important conversation in an effort to inform and educate nurses on its impact on our profession and Ontarians.

What grounds all of our work – and us – despite the controversy that may swirl around a particular issue, is the notion that our advocacy is always anchored on values and evidence, and if these two are in sync, we are well-prepared to muster the courage to press ahead.

RNAO’s values, evidence and courage have delivered much success for nurses and Ontarians. These include having chief nurse executives and chief nurse officers included on hospital and public health unit boards; full-time employment for RNs; nurse practitioner-led clinics; the authority for NPs to admit, treat and discharge people in

hospital in-patient units; locating attending NPs in long-term care; guaranteed employment for new nursing graduates; and so much more. For each of these issues, RNAO led the charge.

There are also examples of RNAO joining others to lend our clout and expertise: Our partnerships to advocate for raising the minimum wage, better housing and social assistance, and the call for an inquest into the tragic deaths of homeless persons.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you, our members, for what you do. You live the values of patient-centred care. Your practice is evidence-based. And you stand up with courage to protect patients and the profession.

And when you are working with patients, clients or residents; or signing an RNAO action alert; or stepping up to the microphone in the corridors of power, educating our future leaders in classrooms, or protesting in the streets – you display courage in all you do.

Let’s keep it up. RNs, NPs and nursing students everywhere must continue to lead with values, evidence and courage to advance a brighter future for nursing, nurses and Ontarians. **RN**

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