

September
2011

ONTARIO CORRECTIONAL NURSES INTEREST GROUP NEWSLETTER

Crystal Miller and Sheleza Latif, co-chairs of the RNAO Ontario Correctional Nurses Interest Group, send this message:

We are honoured and excited to be blazing a path for the voices of the Ontario Correctional Nurses Interest Group.

Our commitments to the membership for the 2011-2012 year include engagement with the membership, advocacy for correctional nurses and our clients, and inspiring the next generation of correctional nurses through mentorship.

Nurses practicing in a correctional environment are challenged to provide care in a paradigm, which can at times collide with core nursing values. However, our compassion and belief in access to health care for our clients drives us to negotiate and balance these paradigms to provide care. The goal of the Ontario Correctional Nurses' Interest Group is to empower nurses in correctional settings to:

- Co-operate professionally
- Promote health in incarcerated communities
- Promote continued education and professional advancement of registered nurses working in corrections
- Mentor new and potential nurses
- Advocate for the health of nurses working in correctional settings

The 2011-2012 year will allow our voice to grow building a solid foundation for empowerment and advocacy.

Feel free to contact our OCNIG co-chairs Crystal Miller and Sheleza Latif by email with your thoughts and ideas:

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Coming Up in the next OCNIG Newsletter:
Resources for Bullying in Corrections
Report on Biennial "Custody and Caring" Conference
Forensic Nursing Education in Ontario
CNO renewal deadline and Quality Assurance hints
Deadline for Articles / Letters to the Editor: 5/11/2011

The following resolution in support of Correctional Nursing was passed at the RNAO AGM in April 2010:

WHEREAS persons in custody in correctional facilities (child, youth and adult) are a vulnerable population because of crowded conditions, reduced physical activity, stress, application of restraints and seclusion, concurrent mental illness and/or substance use, past history of abuse, social discrimination and separation from significant others; and

WHEREAS nurses who work in corrections in Canada are employed by, and report to, correctional administrative staff and are members of the same union employing corrections officers; and

WHEREAS this structure creates moral and ethical conflicts, role confusion, and lack of support for nurses and impairs the development of trusting relationships between nurses and persons in custody; and

WHEREAS other jurisdictions, such as the UK and Australia have implemented policies to strengthen nursing services in correctional facilities (ranging from alternative governance structures to formal partnership agreements between the corrections system and the health care system) and to enforce standards of care, clinical supervision, and educational preparation of nurses who work in corrections;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the RNAO lobby all levels of government and the Canadian Nurses Association to advocate for greater structural support for corrections nurses (governance, accountability, professional development)

RNAO's policy department will be working together with members to realize this resolution. This process involves consulting with stakeholders and researching the most effective way to make this advocacy effective. The Ontario Correctional Nurses' Interest Group, will be needed in this process.

RECENT CORRECTIONAL NURSING RESEARCH

Almost, J., Doran, D., Ogilvie, L., Miller, C., Kennedy, S., Timmings, C., Rose, D., Squires, M., Lee, C., & Bookey-Bassett, S. (2010).

Exploring Worklife Issues in Provincial Correctional Settings.

Research study funded by the Nursing Secretariat, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Correctional nurses hold a unique position within the nursing profession as their role and work environment combines the demands of two systems, corrections and health care. Approximately 500 nurses work in Ontario's provincial correctional system caring for almost 9,000 people (Moncrieff, 2010). However, the role of the correctional nurse has received little attention in nursing research in Canada. Our study aimed to describe the role and work environment of provincial correctional nurses in Ontario, including their workplace environmental concerns, the impact of this work environment on nurse outcomes and generate evidence about strategies for recruiting and retaining nurses in this unique sector.

A mixed methods research design was used in this study.

The first phase of the study involved 17 semi-structured interviews with correctional nurses, health care managers (HCM) and superintendents in five provincial correctional facilities, detention centres and jails in Ontario. The second phase of study involved a survey of all (n=511) eligible correctional nurses and HCMs in the 30 provincial correctional facilities, detention centres and jails across Ontario. All nurses and HCMs were asked to complete a survey asking questions about their role and work environment. Nurses working in provincial correctional facilities in Ontario are similar in age to other nurses working in Ontario (College of Nurses of Ontario, 2009). However nurses in correctional settings are more experienced, have a higher percentage of males, and a lower percentage of full-time

nurses than the general Ontario population.

Key Findings

Role of Provincial Correctional Nurses in Ontario

Correctional nurses work independently in a fast-paced environment with a challenging clientele. The role of provincial correctional nurses encompasses all aspects of nursing practice, including medication administration, provision of treatments such as dressing changes, health counseling, management of mental health and addiction concerns, comprehensive health assessment, emergency care, infection control, and collaborating with other health professionals. The complex health needs of inmates require nurses with specialized knowledge and skill.

Workplace environmental concerns

Participants in this study identified several key issues within their work environment, including:

1. *Inadequate staffing and heavy workloads.*

Participants who worked full-time reported a higher amount of paid overtime than the general nursing population in the National Survey of the Work and Health of Nurses (NSWHN) (Shields, 2006). In this study, HCMs reported even a higher amount of paid and unpaid overtime than RN/RPNs. Overall, 36% of nurses and 48% of HCMs reported an inadequate staffing level.

2. *Limited control over practice and scope of practice.*

Participants reported having some autonomy in their work but limited control over their practice. Close to 40% of correctional nurses reported that they were unable to practice to their full scope of practice due to the work environment.

3. *Limited resources.* Participants reported limited access to resources, such as having enough time to do paperwork and accomplish job requirements, as well as having limited access to equipment, technology, and educational support.
4. *Challenging workplace relationships.* It is alarming to note that a higher percentage of correctional nurses reported experiencing emotional abuse than general duty nurses in the NSWHN (Shields, 2006). Similarly, the levels of conflict were higher than those previously found in acute care settings (Almost, 2010) and a high percentage of participants reported that they had been the subject of bullying during the past year. The main sources of conflict and bullying were correctional officers and nursing colleagues. Intragroup conflict was a significant predictor of job tension, burnout, and intent to leave.

Impact of Work Environment on Nurse Outcomes

This study explored correctional nurses' job satisfaction, stress and burnout.

- *Job satisfaction.* The majority (72%) of correctional nurses were satisfied with their jobs. However a little over a quarter reported feeling dissatisfied with their current job, which is greater than the NSWHN (Shields, 2006). Factors that predicted job satisfaction were the nursing role, access to resources, control over practice, autonomy, and respect.
- *Job stress and burnout.* HCMs reported higher levels of role tension, role overload and burnout than nurses. In this study, approximately 68% of HCMs and 39% of RN/RPNs had scores indicative of high burnout. Factors that predicted nurse burnout were the manager role, limited access to resources, control over practice, and autonomy, as well as higher levels of intragroup conflict.

Conclusions

It was noteworthy that 72% of participants were satisfied with their job and 81% were planning to remain working in corrections. Nevertheless, worklife issues were identified that need to be addressed in

order to strengthen the professional practice environment, attract nurses, retain them, and address role overload and burnout for nurses working in leadership roles.

NOTE:

The full report and a series of five fact sheets highlighting the key findings of the study can be found on the following website www.nhsru.com.

NEI Funding Available for Correctional Nurses

For over 10 years, the Nursing Education Initiative has been supporting nurses to increase their knowledge and professional skills to enhance the quality of care and services provided to Ontarians. This is a program available to all nurses in the province, funded by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and administered by the RNAO and RPNAO. Up to \$1500 in educational funding may be reimbursed for continuing education for nurses, including nurses working in correctional settings.

Whether you are new or an established corrections nurse, you can apply to have tuition for courses or registration fees for conferences reimbursed.

However here are some points to remember:

- To apply, you fill out an application form and provide a receipt and proof you completed the education
- There is a time limit: to be considered, you must submit a complete application within 90 days of the end of your education

First time applicants or those who have not received full funding are given priority in allocating funds. Note that funding is NOT guaranteed.

To learn more or apply, visit www.rnao.org/nei OR you may call our FAQ line at 1-866-464-4405. You may also e-mail educationfunding@rnao.org for information.

From your newsletter editor:

It is my pleasure to edit this first newsletter for the Ontario Correctional Nurses interest Group.

As it goes to print I look forward to receiving your letters to the editor as well as articles and submissions of upcoming events with your area news for the next edition.

I thank co-chairs Crystal Miller and Sheleza Latif for their thoughtful and encouraging words.

Thanks to RNAO staff for information for the Nurses Education Initiative. Very special thanks to RNAO staff Jody Smith for suggestions and coordinating the deadline reminders for submissions when my home had no electricity and internet services during the recent Goderich Tornado.

It is my hope to print three issues of the OCNIG Newsletter each year. The next issue will be a team effort with an early November deadline.

Upcoming Event: CUSTODY AND CARING

The International Biennial Conference on the Nurses Role in the Criminal Justice System takes place October 5-7, 2011 at the Delta Hotel in Regina, Saskatchewan. It is sponsored by the College of Nursing, University of Saskatchewan in collaboration with the Regional Psychiatric Centre and Correctional Service Canada.

The conference purpose is to provide a forum highlighting innovation in practice, education, research, and policy development in the field of corrections and forensic healthcare. Both clinical issues and worklife issues unique to healthcare and other professionals working within the forensic and correctional environment will be featured.

With several members of the Ontario Correctional Nurses Interest Group presenting at this conference, we will look forward to their reports.

Conference information is available online:

<http://www.usask.ca/nursing/custodycaring>

Registration at www.eventregistration.usask.ca

How to Reach the 2011-2012 Executive for the Ontario Correctional Nurses Interest Group:

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NOTE: The Student Liaison Position is currently vacant