



## Membership was “one of the best career moves I ever made”

I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I learned about RNAO. I was 19-years-old, doing my undergrad in nursing at the University of Windsor. Sheila Cameron, one of my greatest mentors to this day, was giving a lecture, and she kept emphasizing the need to remain abreast of current knowledge – calling it a condition of professional practice and College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) standards. At the time, I didn't understand the magnitude of what she was saying, or how I would ever stay current, given health care and nursing are constantly changing. All I knew was that I needed to make sure I had an easy, reliable way of satisfying this regulatory requirement. I asked her for advice on the best resources to keep up-to-date.

“Join RNAO,” she replied.

Professor Cameron told me I would gain access to new, developing and changing information that was based on the best-available evidence. I would be able to ask questions about current and anticipated changes in nursing that would affect my practice. I would be able to connect with other RNs who, like me, were new to the profession. And I would be able to link with seasoned nursing experts who could help me develop my skills and knowledge.

When I graduated and entered the workforce, my first nursing position was in public health. I did not know it at the

time, but that was where my passion for policy advocacy would take root. Admittedly, I did not join RNAO early in my practice. My membership started when I was working in a newly formed community health centre. My role as health promotion co-ordinator led me to search for innovative policy and program initiatives that could support the health needs of the local population. During that search, I kept coming across RNAO position

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papers that addressed determinants of health, such as poverty, nutrition and housing. I was unaware RNAO was involved in such a broad spectrum of critical health issues, but truly appreciated its view that “health is a resource for everyday living.”

Choosing to join RNAO was one of the best career moves I ever made. Yes, I had a young family, and a paycheque that I needed to stretch pretty far back then. But RNAO membership was worth every penny then, and still is today.

Membership kept me informed and helped to influence my practice.

With each issue of *Registered Nurse Journal*, I had the

opportunity to read up on our profession. I felt like I had the inside scoop on what was happening in practice, research, education, administration and policy. I knew that if I had an idea or concern that could make a positive difference to patients and/or nursing colleagues, all I needed to do was call RNAO. And, I did call with ideas about practice issues, regulatory changes, and more. I was listened to, and received practical and timely responses.

When I went back to university to become a nurse practitioner, I relied heavily on RNAO's best practice guidelines. The association was a resource to get advice on how to raise issues with administrative leaders to improve patient safety and enhance quality of care. As recently as 2011, when I began my role as chief nurse executive at London Health Sciences Centre, I integrated concepts from RNAO's healthy work environment BPGs, including professionalism, staffing/workload, collaborative practice, and inter-professionalism, to create a healthier work environment for my staff.

For 25 years, RNAO membership has fostered my

growth and given me the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way to nursing and patient care.

If I have any regret, it is that I did not join RNAO while I was a nursing student. Looking back, the knowledge and experience I gained as an RNAO member would have been invaluable as a novice RN. Choosing RNAO membership is the first step in building the confidence to achieve a fulfilling career. I urge each and every one of you to ensure your association's continued success by renewing your membership, and inviting others to join.

Take the time to talk to a colleague or nursing student who isn't yet part of what we have built together. We are more than 39,000-members strong and counting. We represent hundreds of years of nursing experience. Let's build on that for the betterment of the profession and the health system in which we work. **RN**

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Join forces with more than 39,000 RNs, NPs and nursing students across Ontario. Renew your membership

- online at [myRNAO.ca](http://myRNAO.ca)
- with an application form from RNAO.ca
- or by calling 416-599-1925 or 1-800-268-7199