

Registered Nurse (RN) Replacement

Will you support RNAO's call to put a stop to the replacement of RNs with less qualified providers?

As the health system shifts towards community care, we cannot lose sight of our acute care sector. In response to the budget freezes in hospitals, some organizations are reverting to models of functional nursing – a task-oriented model that delivers fragmented care – and replacing RNs with less qualified health-care providers. These organizations say it will save them money, but we know it will not. It will worsen health outcomes and actually increase expenses. It is a short-sighted solution that jeopardizes the future of Ontario's health system. This is occurring at a time when Ontario has the second lowest RN-to-population ratio and needs to add 16,659 more RNs (17.1 per cent) to the workforce to catch up with the rest of Canada.¹

Ontario's latest *Action Plan for Health Care* wants to put patients first.² How can we serve the best interests of patients/clients while replacing RNs with less qualified health-care providers when only the sickest of the sick are cared for in hospital? The evidence conclusively shows that using RNs results in improved clinical and financial outcomes. Indeed, the amount of direct patient care RNs provide is directly linked to mortality and morbidity rates. Higher levels of care from RNs result in fewer deaths, readmissions, pressure ulcers, pneumonia and other pulmonary events, post-operative infections, urinary tract infections, upper gastrointestinal bleeds, cardiac arrests, and medication errors. A higher proportion of RNs is also linked to shorter lengths of stay and improvements in failure to rescue, as well as superior organizational effectiveness and budgetary outcomes. Recent evidence also demonstrates that client outcomes improve when RNs provide direct care instead of assuming a supervisory role in functional nursing.

RNAO is not sitting idly by as RN replacement is occurring. We have issued an *Action Alert*, calling on nurses, other health-care professionals, and the public to let the minister of health know that RN replacement is not acceptable. To date, over 8,000 responses have been received. In addition, RNAO is conducting a comprehensive review of trends and the evidence pertaining to nurse staffing and models of care, and will be releasing a policy report in the spring 2016.

References:

¹ Ontario Pre-Budget 2015: Moving Forward on Deficits: Social, Health, Environment and Infrastructure – Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs (2015, January 29). *Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario*.

² Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care (February 2015). Retrieved from:
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ms/ecfa/healthy_change/docs/rep_patientsfirst.pdf