

NURSING NOTES

Streamlined process helps IENs

Internationally educated nurses (IEN) are benefitting from a new application process to help them fulfill their practice requirements in Canada. Under the new system, nursing registration documents are submitted to a central database. Piloted by the National Nursing Assessment Service (NNAS) (a partnership of Canadian nursing regulatory bodies), the new process began in August. Every provincial and territorial regulatory body still maintains its own policies, and ultimately decides whether or not an individual will be licensed to practise in its jurisdiction. According to NNAS, the new system offers an “open, fair and consistent” process while still ensuring the standards for nursing care in Canada are met. The one-year pilot of the program saw more than 5,000 IEN applications from 113 countries. A survey of applicants found 93 per cent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their overall experience was positive. For more information, visit www.NNAS.ca



Questions raised about new entry-to-practice exam

Some Canadian nursing organizations have expressed concerns about higher fail rates for a newly introduced entry-to-practice exam.

In January, the NCLEX-RN, derived from an American exam, replaced the CRNE as a licensing requirement in most Canadian jurisdictions. Through the first half of 2015, nearly 32 per cent of prospective Ontario nurses taking the NCLEX failed – compared to 19 per cent failing the CRNE in all of 2014.

“It is too soon to draw conclusions on the 2015 exam results. (Preliminary data) shows variation among the schools both in the number of graduates writing the exam and in the pass rate,” said CNO Executive Director Anne Coghlan, adding the College will continue to monitor data as they wait for the annual report, available in early 2016.

Nurses win case against mandatory masking during flu season

After considering evidence from six Canadian and U.S. experts over 18 days of hearings, Arbitrator Jim Hayes determined that a hospital policy requiring nurses and other health-care workers to wear an unfitted surgical mask for the entire flu season if they choose not to get vaccinated to be unreasonable and “coercive.” Although the precedent-setting case was against Sault Area Hospital, the “vaccinate or mask” policy was introduced in a number of Ontario hospitals. The Ontario Nurses’ Association (ONA) criticized the policy for being more symbolic than a scientifically based tool in the fight against influenza, and had experts testify during hearings that forcing healthy hospital RNs to wear masks did little or nothing to prevent transmission of the virus. Hayes also found the

policy undermines the collective agreement rights of employees to choose whether or not they will get the flu vaccine. RNAO strongly encourages nurses to be vaccinated. To find out more about the arbitrator’s decision, visit www.ONA.org and click on the links to its media room for the full report.

Getting the full picture

Adrienne Harris-Hale, an RNAO member and education director for an Ontario company that grows cannabis for medical purposes, responds to a Nursing Notes item in the July/August 2015 issue of the Journal (New report confirms dangers of using marijuana during adolescence).

While no one is suggesting that cannabis use is recommended for this age group, by not providing information on medical cannabis in your *Journal*, many nurses only hear one side to this issue. I am a nurse who has worked in rehab

and pain management for approximately seven years. I have found it difficult to find credible information related to medical cannabis use.

There is some very good research and information found through the Canadian Consortium for the Investigation of Cannabinoids, the International Cannabinoid Research Society, and the International Association for Cannabis as Medicine, which I can’t help but notice never finds its way into the *Journal*. I am certain I am not the only nurse struggling with the lack of credible information. We need to lift some of the stigma attached to this treatment. **RN**

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