

Name: Doris Grinspun, Executive Director

Organization: Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario

Date: Thursday, October 15, 2009

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on *A Proposed Strategy to Address Hepatitis C in Ontario 2009-2014*. As the professional association for registered nurses working in all roles and sectors across the province, we support an integrated approach across the five major areas of, prevention, education, treatment, support, as well as surveillance and research. We affirm the importance of the articulated first principles that include access equity; harm reduction approach; effective partnership and collaboration; reducing stigma and discrimination; monitoring and evaluation; and greater involvement of people living with Hepatitis C.

In particular, RNAO would like to stress the importance of making public health programming decisions on the basis of science. Given the compelling evidence of the effectiveness of harm reduction programs in reducing transmission of blood-borne pathogens such as HIV, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C and in improving health outcomes, harm reduction programs, tools, and outreach must be expanded for people who use drugs. As Canadian correctional facilities are lagging behind other jurisdictions that have substantially reduced Hepatitis C transmission through harm reduction, we urge the McGuinty government to expedite this report's recommendations on harm reduction, health education, testing, and treatment for inmates in correctional facilities.

This report recognizes that people with Hepatitis C often face multiple challenges that fall broadly under the social determinants of health. To address these multiple needs, this report recommends an electronic navigation tool for local and provincial programs. RNAO respectfully urges, in the strongest possible terms, a comprehensive upstream approach to address poverty including the government's immediate action on increasing the minimum wage, investing in affordable, supportive housing, transforming the broken social assistance system including raising the rates to reflect the actual cost of living, implementing a Nutritious Food Benefit of \$100 per month to mitigate dangerously low social assistance rates, etc.

In order to increase equitable access to HCV treatment and care across the province, RNAO urges the government to strengthen multidisciplinary models of comprehensive primary health care, including swift implementation of NP-led clinics in all underserved communities.

RNAO offers also its expertise on Best Practice Guidelines. Particularly pertinent as resources for comprehensive care include:

Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (2006). *Client Centred Care*. Toronto: Author.

Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (2002). *Enhancing Healthy Adolescent Development*. Toronto: Author.

Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (2007). *Embracing Cultural Diversity in Health Care: Developing Cultural Competence*. Toronto: Author.

Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (2006). *Establishing Therapeutic Relationships*. Toronto: Author.

Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (2009). *Supporting Clients on Methadone Maintenance Treatment*. Toronto: Author.



All of these guidelines are available without charge on the RNAO website at <http://www.rnao.org/>

Ontario's registered nurses look forward to working together with people living with Hepatitis C, those at risk for acquiring Hepatitis C., our colleagues, and our communities in improving the quality of life, health outcomes and health care services across the province.