

RESOLUTION # 5

Submitted by Community Health Nurses' Initiatives Group (CHNIG)

WHEREAS CNA released Vision 2020, and Preferred Future, two documents highlighting a commitment to developing communities and community health nurses as the future direction of practice with over 60% of RNs expected to be practicing in the community;

WHEREAS research indicates the devaluing of community health nursing in the basic baccalaureate nursing programs, which remain focused in acute care, resulting in inadequate preparation of nurses to meet the demands of community health nursing practice,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that RNAO collaborate with all relevant sectors of the education and the health care system to ensure the integration and curricular enhancement of community health nursing theory and practice in all undergraduate nursing programs in Ontario

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BACKGROUND

Over the past 10 years a shift has begun in raising awareness and the importance of community health nursing. Community health nursing concepts and competencies apply to nurses working in home health, public health, primary care and other community health settings. Although the number of registered community health nurses, in Canada, rose by 2.5% from 1996 to 2005, it is still only a slight increase (CIHI, 2006). In 2006, the majority of working nurses were in a hospital setting while only 24% were in a community health nursing setting. (CIHI, 2006).

Recently, CNA released Vision 2020, and Preferred Future, two documents highlighting a commitment to developing communities and community health nurses as the future direction of practice (Villeneuve & MacDonald, 2006, CNA, 2008). By 2020 it is estimated that over 60% of registered nurses will be working in the community (Villeneuve et al., 2006). Both nationally and internationally, these documents clearly identify community health nursing and its principles as the future of care. All these structures highlight the importance of increasing knowledge, awareness and improved practice requirements for community health nursing practice in Ontario.

The resurgence of community health nursing practice has become necessary within the changing local and global context of health care. Significant paradigm shifts are occurring in the Canadian health system in terms of shifting from hospital and illness based care to community and health based care. A recent national descriptive qualitative study to understand priority issues facing community health nursing in Canada raised concerns about the quality of community health nursing education including the devaluing of community health nursing in the basic baccalaureate and graduate programs and the inadequate preparation of nurses to meet the demands of community health nursing practice (Schofield et al, 2008). Consequently there are concerns about insufficient time in theoretical and clinical placements necessary to develop entry to practice competencies in the promotion of health of the individual, families and communities. It is imperative that a community health nursing framework of practice including primary health care principles, social justice and equity are imbedded within each curriculum so every nurse graduating has the capacity to practice within this framework.

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