

UNA STAT

UNITED NURSES OF ALBERTA NEWS UPDATE FOR MEMBERS

Newspapers discover nursing shortage

- In the past week the Calgary Herald and Edmonton Journal have run large headlines about the impact of the nursing shortage: "Nursing shortage shuts ORs". In at least one case it was a disgruntled doctor who called the newspaper about "his" surgeries being cancelled and rescheduled.

"The nursing shortage crisis has been getting worse and will continue to worsen," says UNA President Heather Smith. "There's no satisfaction at all in 'I told you so' when patients are being seriously impacted."

UNA has for some time been urging the government to put significant money into "health human resources".

"Our recent Collective Agreement includes several innovative measures to assist with recruiting and especially with retaining nurses," Heather Smith says. "But you must have nurses to recruit. Government must delay no more in scaling up nursing education in the province."

Capital Health plans for 200 international nurses, but short 550

- The Capital Health Region recently announced it is retrofitting the nurses' residence at the Miskiwicordia Hospital in Edmonton and working on

other locations in Edmonton to provide temporary homes for up to 77 nursing recruits to the province. Capital Health announced it hopes to bring in 200 international nurses from the Philippines and the United Kingdom by 2009. But the Region also says it needs 550 more nurses now.

UNA challenging refusal to pay lump sum on sick leave for part-time and casual

- UNA and HBAs have agreed to take a grievance on payment of the lump sum to mediation under the new grievance resolution process. The issue is whether part-time and casual employees receive the lump sum payment pro-rated for time off on disability or vacation. Full-time Employees do receive the full lump sum, which includes vacation and other time and UNA maintains part-time and casual Employees are unfairly discriminated against.

Bill 41 gives Health Minister power over health professions

- The Alberta Medical Association and the College of Physicians and Surgeons have taken such exception to Bill 41 they published a full-page ad about it. The Bill gives the Health Minister power to intervene in the Standards of Practice and Bylaws and Regulations of the Colleges, like the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA). CARNA had asked the government

to remove Section 135, the portion that gives the Minister sweeping powers. Hancock is said to have pushed forward the changes after his department was blind-sided by sterilization headlines earlier this year. "There was a complaint to the College of Physicians and Surgeons some two years ago," Hancock told the media about a question of sterilization in a Lloydminster doctor's office. His department was not informed until much later. "In my view that's not good enough," Hancock said.

Legislature watcher Mark Lisac in his weekly report notes that Hancock may be concerned with the shortage of docs, with more accreditation of foreign-trained doctors, and IS interested in getting his hands on the standards of practice.

Calgary Employees on education leave need to apply for Lump Sum payment

- Part-time Employees who are on an approved education leave are eligible for the Market Condition Lump Sum payment, but Calgary Health Region's payroll system could not process the payment automatically for those on education leave. Calgary Employees on education leave should put in a request in writing for payment of the Lump Sum to their manager. The Lump Sum payment is \$750 for the half year ending September 30. It is pro-rated for part-time and casual employees to their regular hours actually worked.

Negotiations in Long-term care head off to mediation

■ The UNA Extencicare Negotiating Committee is working for a new contract for all the UNA Extencicare facilities across the province. The Committee and the Employers have jointly agreed to apply to bring a mediator into the talks, which have stalled over a range of issues. Negotiations with the Hardisty Nursing Home have also hit a wall and UNA is applying for a mediator in those talks as well.

Negotiations are also underway, or about to begin at Canadian Blood Services, Central Care Corporation, Forest Grove long-term care in Calgary and Agape Hospice in Calgary

Tentative agreements have been reached and are going to a members' vote with the Victorian Order of Nurses in Edmonton, and with Club Sierra long-term care in Medicine Hat.

Government tries to lure nurses with info sessions

■ Internationally educated nurses trickled in to find out about Alberta jobs at a Fantasyland Hotel event on December 3rd. The provincial Health and Wellness Workforce Action Plan team put together "information sessions" in Edmonton December 3 and in Calgary December 4 to attract "lapsed" nurses or internationally credentialed nurses into the work force. There was a small but steady stream of interested people visiting recruitment booths at the Edmonton session. Besides Health Region recruitment displays, the session included information on Grant MacEwan's 18 month refresher course, and Mount Royal's "Bridge to Canadian Nursing" program. All the nursing College's also had displays. The College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA)

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

Too Sick...

At a Primary Care Clinic in Texas, an older woman found one reason or another to visit daily. She had few friends and liked to chat with the Doctors and Nurses.

They in turn treated all of her medical complaints with seeming concern and compassion.

Showing up one afternoon, after being absent for over a week, a Nurse asked her why she hadn't been there in so long.

The lady responded, "I've been sick all week."

works with both programs so that successful students get licensed. Nurses who successfully complete the refresher course are directly licensed by CARNA. Nurses who complete the international "Bridge" program still write the Canadian Registered Nurse Exam.

No one knows how many Registered Nurses or Registered Psychiatric Nurses there are in Alberta who have "lapsed" licenses. Estimates are in the thousands. There may also be hundreds or thousands of internationally-educated nurses in the province who are not certified in Canada. Health and Wellness wants to encourage these people to reconsider the nursing profession. Health and Wellness has not, however, announced any special financial support or incentives for these programs.

Some managers unfairly denying overtime

Reports have been coming forward that managers in the Calgary Health Region are denying overtime for missed breaks or after-shift overtime. In response, UNA is urging nurses to claim all their overtime. UNA has published a special poster that

tells nurses: "Don't be intimidated." When employers try to stretch budgets, and staff, by refusing overtime, they are distorting the costs of what is needed for good care. If you are denied payment for overtime contact your Local executive or your Labour Relations Officer.

Inquest makes 26 recommendations in murder of nurse

■ This week the jury in the inquest into the deaths of nurse Lori Dupont and anaesthetist Dr. Marc Daniel released 26 recommendations to prevent a similar tragedy. The ten-week long inquest examined the Nov. 12, 2005, in-hospital stabbing death of Dupont, a Windsor, Ontario nurse and the suicide of the man who killed her, Daniel, an ex-boyfriend.

The jury called for an overhaul of Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act to address emotional harm and harassment, as well as physical injury.

The recommendations called for an organized response to threats of abuse or harassment, and an approach to "aggressive discipline" and clear codes of behaviour in hospitals.

The inquest heard evidence that the hospital had "overwhelming information" that Dr. Daniel should not have been allowed back to work after an earlier suicide attempt in February 2005, when he and Dupont had split up. What followed was a "pattern of stalking and intimidating behaviour."

Hospital staff and patient safety is more important than a doctor's right to practice, said the jury's written ruling.

Ontario Nurses' Association lawyer Elizabeth McIntyre said the jury, "understood that the physicians are living under one law and everybody else is living under another law."