

A Focus on Nursing Human Resources

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From November 3–5, 2005, the Academy of Canadian Executive Nurses was involved in three meetings in Ottawa: ACEN's Education Conference on November 3 and its Annual General Meeting on November 5. On November 4, ACEN members were invited to join the Association of Canadian Healthcare Organizations (ACAHO) at its invitational conference.

The focus of the ACEN Education Conference was on nursing human resources planning within the context of the recommendations made in the report of the first phase of the Nursing Sector Study. Fourteen presentations were given by ACEN members, describing local and provincial/territorial initiatives to retain current nursing staff and to recruit new staff. All presentations were based on an analysis of projected nursing human resources requirements in large healthcare organizations and regional authorities from all parts of the country.

The stark reality was that each and every healthcare organization will fall short of meeting its nursing resources needs unless something significant is done to retain current nurses and to recruit new graduates. Although we have been aware of the forecasted shortage of nurses from a national perspective, it was a harsh reminder to hear the projected numbers required to meet needs at the local, institutional level. Participants agreed that meeting the nursing needs of Canadians over the next several years may be one of the greatest challenges facing the profession.

Given the number of reports and recommendations concerning health human resources that have been published over the past few years, it was reassuring to hear about the many initiatives being implemented by governments and, more importantly, by healthcare employers aimed at addressing these problems. What follows are highlights from the Education

Conference illustrating such initiatives.

Presentations were featured on the use of different mentorship models to help ease the transition of new nurse graduates into the workplace. One approach focused on the use of late-career nurses as mentors, thereby delaying the retirement of these nurses from the workforce. In another area, final-year undergraduate students were hired as employees and provided with extended orientation, including mentorship, in their roles. This model resulted in the majority of undergraduate employees becoming graduate employees on the same units. Generally, the results of the initiatives reported showed increased retention of staff, fewer sick days and higher morale. Other presentations were directed towards improving the quality of work life for staff and ranged from educational initiatives to creative scheduling and staff involvement in staffing solutions. One institution created a staff renewal project in which nurses spent 20% of their time in professional development and 80% in practice. The nurses also participated in an educational program focused on one philosophy or theory of nursing care. The purpose of the project was to improve patient care and nurses' sense of belonging and commitment to their work. Early results have been extremely favourable from the perspective of the nurses, patients and their families, and employers.

Professional development, scholarship and discovery were common elements of several presentations. In one healthcare organization where sick

time was very high, staff morale very low and quality of patient care deteriorating, the nursing executive team launched a staff renewal program as a key reinvestment strategy. The program was a three-week, off-site educational program for all staff that clarified role expectations and associated professional behaviour related to clinical practice. The program was rigorously designed and included an evaluation plan. There were significant decreases in both paid and unpaid sick time in the months following the program. Staff reported increased synergy, sense of team, clarity about expectations and resolution of longstanding issues.

Patient safety and staff satisfaction were also common themes throughout the presentations and discussions. Well-developed models of staff resources planning were presented, and ACEN members agreed that much more analysis and evidence is required to continue to improve nursing productivity, patient outcomes and staff morale. Copies of the PowerPoint presentations are available at www.acen.ca.

Those attending the Education Conference also had a guided tour of the History of Nursing exhibit at the Museum of Civilization. The feedback was enthusiastic. Social time and networking were incorporated into breaks, lunches and a dinner together at a new Ottawa restaurant. From the volume of noise in the room it is fair to say that "a good time was had by all."

At the Annual General Meeting held on November 5, ACEN members approved the proposed by-laws of the Academy. There was considerable

discussion on the topic of the current membership and fee structure, with concerns that many small ACAHO/ACEN members could not afford the \$3,000/year fee, which is levied at that particular membership category. While members were sympathetic to this reality, they voted to maintain the current fee structure with a commitment to re-examine the issue at the next annual meeting. Members felt it was critical to establish a solid financial base for ACEN in order to continue to develop an Ottawa office and presence and to conduct the Academy's business. They also requested that the Membership and Governance Committee continue its dialogue with smaller organizations, including rural healthcare facilities, to explore feasible options for ACEN membership. There was some discussion related to exploring the use of a sliding-scale fee structure based on member organizations' overall budget. This funding model has been used successfully in other national and international organizations. The Membership and Governance Committee will examine all options and present some alternative approaches to funding at the 2006 Annual General Meeting.

Members present at the Annual General Meeting heard and discussed the reports of three ACEN committees – Policy, Leadership and Membership/Governance. Some funds were committed to the work of these committees over the coming year. It was agreed that some of the products of the Policy Committee and the Leadership Committee would be the subject of

future ACEN columns in the *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership (CJNL)*.

A report was received from the Editorial Advisory Board of *CJNL* and its publisher. The journal is becoming very popular nationally and internationally. Its Web site statistics are impressive and suggest that many nurses and other health professionals look to *CJNL* for information and initiatives on a frequent and regular basis. The minutes of the Annual General Meeting are posted on the ACEN Web site at www.acen.ca.

At the end of the meeting, the membership formally thanked Barb McGill, Vice President of Community Programs and Chief Nursing Officer, Atlantic Health Sciences Corporation, outgoing president, for her outstanding contribution to ACEN. Barb will continue to serve on the Executive Committee as past president. Members then extended a warm welcome to incoming president Wendy Hill, Vice President, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Nursing Officer, Capital Health, Edmonton. Wendy has established two major goals for her presidency. The first is to establish a stable financial base for ACEN. Second, she is committed to ensuring that ACEN is the “go to” organization for nursing leadership.

Overall, the Annual General Meeting and Education Conference were great successes. There was a larger attendance than ACEN has seen in several years. Participants commented on how important it is to have this time and intellectual space with one another, and saw peer support and networking as key benefits of belonging to the Academy.

Plans are already underway for next fall's meeting. Dates will be posted on the ACEN Web site as soon as they are confirmed. They will also be distributed to members via the listserve.

By the time this issue of *CJNL* reaches you, it will be membership renewal time for ACEN. We are currently preparing the process and

streamlining the technical aspects. If you are currently a member, you will receive all the required documents on-line. If you are not yet a member of ACEN, you can request a membership application from our office at asgadmin@associationstrategygroup.com, or you can download the application from our Web site: www.acen.ca.



The Academy of Canadian Executive Nurses

L'Académie des Chefs de Direction en Soins Infirmiers

Academy of Canadian Executive Nurses Scholarship for Nursing Leadership

**CALL FOR
APPLICATIONS**

Terms of Reference

The Award

The Academy of Canadian Executive Nurses is offering a Scholarship of \$2,500 to be awarded annually to a nurse pursuing graduate studies in Nursing, at the Master's or PhD level. This scholarship is designed to provide support for a candidate preparing her/himself for nursing leadership positions within Canada.

Criteria for Eligibility and Selection

1. Demonstrated interest in and aptitude for nursing leadership based upon prior nursing experience.
2. Demonstrated commitment to the Nursing Profession based upon interest and involvement in associations or groups to promote high standards of client care or projects to promote "best practices" in client care.
3. Confirmed admission to a graduate program.
4. If already registered in a program with partial completion of studies, provision of evidence of sound performance in the completed course work within that program.
5. Demonstrated interest in, and commitment to advancing nursing leadership in Canada.

Application Procedure

The completed application should be addressed to:
ACEN Scholarship
ACEN
99 Fifth Ave. Suite 10
Ottawa, K1S 5K4
www.acen.ca

and include the following:

1. **A cover letter that describes:**
 - The candidate's career goals/aspirations.

- The significance of nursing leadership.
 - Should be no longer than one or two typed pages.
2. **A detailed curriculum vitae which includes information about:**
 - Applicant's name, address, phone numbers, Fax and e-mail address.
 - All post-secondary education.
 - All work experience within and outside of nursing. Include information on all clinical, teaching, research and administrative experiences, as well as publications, presentations and workshops given.
 3. **Academic transcripts:**
 - If the candidate is undertaking a Master's degree, submit undergraduate transcript.
 - If undertaking a PhD, submit Master's transcript.
 4. **Two recent letters of reference from healthcare employers or supervisors.**
 - One should be from a nurse in leadership position.

The completed application must be received no later than **April 30, 2006**.

Selection Process

A committee consisting of three ACEN members representing both service and educational settings (and the executive) will review applications through a blinded process and select a candidate for the Scholarship. Applicants will be notified by late June regarding the outcome of the selection process. Should applicants wish to re-apply for a second year of support; the application process will need to be repeated in the same way. Don't forget other important scholarship opportunities for advancement in nursing via the Canadian Nurses Foundation.

Visit their website at www.canadiannursesfoundation.com