



New brochures encourage RPN utilization, training

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by MAUREEN WHELAN

HSA has joined with the College of Psychiatric Nurses of BC, the Union of Psychiatric Nurses and the Ministry of Health to produce two brochures on psychiatric nursing.

This was a new role for the union to play as historically HSA does not involve itself in areas usually covered by the professional associations of our members.

In this case, however, all parties share the common goal of increasing awareness of the public and particularly the health care employer of the role RPNs play in the health care system.

The first brochure deals with psychiatric nursing as a career choice with an intended audience of secondary school students and others making career decisions.

The second brochure, called Open the Window to Mental Health, emphasizes the skills and training of psychiatric nurses and where they can be best utilized in the health system.

Even with the current nursing shortage, it is still a fact that RPNs are often under-utilized. This is primarily because of a lack of understanding of the RPN training and how it prepares the psychiatric nurse to work in all mental health settings, intermediate and long term care as well as in emergency rooms, palliative care, rehabilitation units and other "non-traditional" areas.

The brochure is being sent to all health care employers as well as to all RPNs in the province and Chief Stewards in units employing RPNs.

Meanwhile, HSA is working with the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses to lobby the government and Douglas College to increase the number of places available for students wishing to study psychiatric nursing in BC.

As with registered nurses, it is an unfortunate fact that Douglas College, the only training institute for RPNs in BC, has decreased the annual number of RPNs graduating from 64 to 48 over the past several years.

This has contributed to today's nursing shortage and must be addressed by the College and government. HSA, UPN, and the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses is calling for an increase in the annual number of places available for prospective psychiatric nursing students from 48 to 100.

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