

Open Letter to Nurses January/February 2007 Embracing the "Gift of Life"



The first Open Letter of the year has a tool that may help you keep your New Year's resolutions (if you haven't given up on them yet) and an update on the Long Term Care Strategy. First, let's discuss how you can help others by embracing the "Gift of Life" message this year.

All of us play a vital role in promoting the options of organ and tissue donation.

Did you know that at any given time there are over 150 Manitobans waiting for a kidney or lung transplant? In 2006, 48 Manitobans received a kidney transplant and three Manitobans received a lung transplant. In 2005, 296 bones, 26 skin grafts, one heart valve, and 68 corneas were transplanted in Manitoba. This is thanks to prompt referrals from health care providers and the generosity of donor families.

Three human tissue gift agencies coordinate organ and tissue donation in Manitoba: Transplant Manitoba-Gift of Life, Tissue Bank Manitoba, and Lions Eye Bank of Manitoba and Northwest Ontario.

Nurses have the opportunity to promote and discuss organ and tissue donation with patients and their families. Organ and tissue donation plays an important role in advanced care planning. Education is the most important tool we have to increase the rates of organ and tissue donation. Talk to your patients about their options for end-of-life decisions and encourage them to speak to their physicians and family members about their wishes.

If you have questions about organ donation, please call Michael Perrella, RN, BSc, at 204-787-8844. Transplant Manitoba-Gift of Life is launching their website February 1, 2007, with information for health care providers, at www.transplantmanitoba.ca.

For questions about tissue donation, please call Kevin Russell, RT, CTBS, at 204-940-1758. For more information about Tissue Bank Manitoba, go to: www.wrha.mb.ca/prog/tbm.

For questions regarding eye donation, please call Lions Eye Bank of Manitoba and Northwest Ontario at 204-788-8419.

Coming soon to a site near you: the Personal Health Risk Appraisal tool

It's a New Year and many of you have made resolutions. Some of you may have plans to quit smoking, lose weight, or achieve a better work/life balance this year. Having a baseline assessment of your current health status is good way to start achieving your resolutions.

To help you reduce your health risks, the WRHA—through funding from Health Canada's Healthy Workplace Project—is delivering the Health Risk Appraisal (HRA) to participating health care employees and sites in Winnipeg.

The HRA is a voluntary, confidential online survey that looks at all your personal health risks. A Personal Wellness Report will be automatically generated based on your responses to the survey. Your report will tell you how to get help reducing your health risks. The survey takes about 20 to 40 minutes to complete. *There is no obligation to participate in the survey.*

Look for information about Internet access and time frames for completing the survey at your site. If you have questions about the HRA, or want to know if your site is participating, please contact your site HR department or wellness committee.

You can access the HRA online at www.wellness-hra.ca. Click on the "Create Your Account" button. The password is: health4w.

Long Term Care Strategy update

You may have heard about changes occurring to the structure of long term care in the region and that may concern you because you know patients who are awaiting placement. You should know that expansions are already underway to increase the amount of services available in the community.

The five-year Long Term Care Strategy will change the way services are delivered in personal care homes and the community. Personal care homes will be reducing the number of shared accommodations and creating more single-bed rooms. More affordable community-based housing and support options will be created that will increase the choice of living arrangements and environments that suit individual needs and reduce the likelihood of multiple moves.

Increasing options in the community and improving personal care home environments will benefit patients and health care providers by ensuring patients receive care in the environment that will best meet their needs.

More details about the Long Term Care Strategy can be found at www.wrha.mb.ca/ltc/strategy.

Worth a look

The Longwoods Publishing site, located at www.longwoods.com, is a great source for journal articles, videos, health care policy, case studies and podcasts created for health care professionals. While you're there, sign up for the weekly Longwoods e-letter, which is full of ideas, policy, best practices and learning events.

Recent Gallup Poll names nursing the most honest and ethical profession

For the eighth consecutive year, nurses clenched the top spot in the annual Gallup list of occupations ranked for their honesty and ethical standards. Of the Americans polled in the period of December 8-10, 2006, 84 per cent describe nurses' ethics as "very high" or "high".

Health care providers overall fared well, with pharmacists, veterinarians, physicians and dentists rounding out the top five. I expect the results would be similar if Canadians were polled.

Look for the next Open Letter in March, when we'll discuss an easy intervention you can use in your practice to reduce patient harm.

Sincerely,



Jan Currie, Vice-President and Chief Nursing Officer

Look for my next letter in March. I appreciate hearing your comments.

Submissions are welcome.

You can reach me via email at: info@wrha.mb.ca; via fax at: (204) 926-7007; or mail to:

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