

# We are proud nurses

Annual Report 2019/20

# Message from the President and CEO



On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff, we are delighted to share WeRPN's 2019-2020 Annual Report.

The past year has been filled with change, challenge and opportunity for Ontario RPNs and our association.

It's more important than ever to have a strong, united voice to advocate for change in today's climate. As your professional association, our ability to deliver the impactful work we do depends on our members' ongoing dedication. We're pleased to report that our membership base continues to be strong. Over 2019-20, our membership grew to 15,134, increasing four percent compared to the previous year.

Last fall, the association began a new era with the launch of our new name and visual



identity, WeRPN. Over the past several decades, the role of RPNs has evolved, and we felt it was important for our association to evolve with it. As WeRPN, we remain committed to championing our members' concerns, collaborating with health partners, and positioning ourselves to be the kind of future-oriented association that can meet the changing needs of Ontario's RPNs.

We kicked off this year celebrating our profession. The World Health Organization had designated 2020 the Year of the Nurse and Midwife – bringing international attention to the important role nurses play in supporting health across the globe. To mark this occasion, we released a video campaign honouring Ontario nurses and celebrating the dynamic and evolving role that they play across our health system.

A few short months later, nurses would be in the spotlight again in the fight against COVID-19. Our members were on the frontlines day in and day out, caring for Ontarians and taking every step to keep us safe. We made it a priority to make sure our elected officials responded to the needs of RPNs and other healthcare workers during this challenging time. We also made sure that RPNs had access to the latest information and guidance to support safe practice with the introduction of our new COVID-19 newsletter. When nurses had questions, our professional practice team was there to support them.

We knew that Nursing Week would look different this year. Usually, our team travels across Ontario to connect with RPNs in every corner of the province. While public

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**“It’s more important than ever to have a strong, united voice to advocate for change in today’s climate.”**

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health measures prevented us from being together, the pandemic wouldn’t stop us from celebrating the extraordinary work of nurses. With the support of a range of partners, we curated care packages for our members to thank them for their incredible work on behalf of Ontarians. This mailer was accompanied by an online campaign video that showcased RPNs in PPE and encouraged Ontarians to share stories of thanks and appreciation for nurses.

We saw some alarming trends this year in professional malpractice and liability insurance. The frequency of claims for disciplinary actions has climbed dramatically – more than double over the past year, and the cost of legal defence has also risen substantially. Despite these increases, WeRPN has found a way to absorb many of these costs and made it a priority to ensure our members continue to receive comprehensive coverage that responds to increased liability

exposures. Over the coming months, we’ll continue to monitor the nursing legal landscape and keep you informed.

Over the past year, we have continued to strengthen our relationship with elected officials at Queen’s Park and ensure they recognize the crucial contributions that RPNs make across our health system. We advocated for continued funding for education and professional development for RPNs through the Nursing Education Initiative. Another notable success was the government commitment in early 2020 to allow Ontario colleges to grant degrees. This means more access to nursing education for future nurses and RPNs interested in gaining new skills or bridging to the RN role.

That’s just the beginning. Our Annual Report highlights the wide range of initiatives and projects that have kept us busy this past year. While it has certainly been a different

year than most, we remain driven by our goal to support Ontario RPNs. Thank you to our members for your ongoing commitment and the trust you place in us to deliver excellent programming, cutting edge professional practice resources and advocate on your behalf.

And finally, we would like to recognize and thank the amazing staff of WeRPN who work so hard to ensure we’re able to deliver on the mandate given to us by you, our members. Thank you for your incredible contributions to practical nursing in Ontario.



**Linda Keirl, RPN**  
President



**Dianne Martin, RPN, RN, BScN, MA**  
Chief Executive Officer

In a health system where resources are strained, pressures are mounting, care is evolving, and everyone is at their most vulnerable, the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario (WeRPN) builds the profile and professional capacity of RPNs so we can better care for our patients and better support our fellow health workers.

As leaders in professional practice, we champion the critical role of RPNs to Ontario's health system and offer ongoing professional development to support excellence, quality and safety of care.

Today, more than 50,000 RPNs support patients, clients and residents in Ontario hospitals, public health units, community, long-term care facilities, schools, and private health providers.



### WE ARE ACROSS THE HEALTH SYSTEM

RPNs are regulated health professionals who deliver excellent care and support to patients, residents and clients across the continuum of care.

RPNs are the second largest group of regulated health professionals in our healthcare system



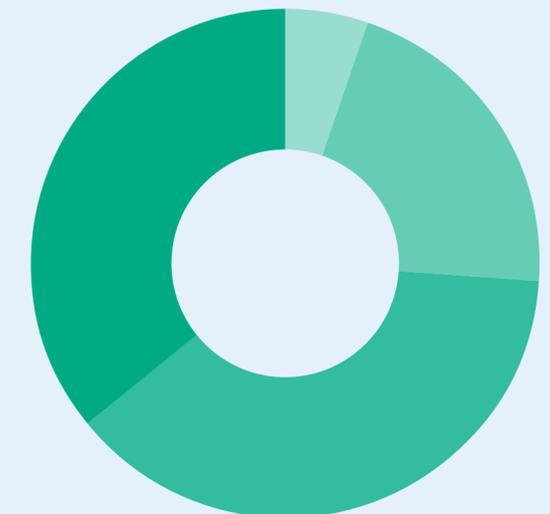
Over 95% of RPNs provide direct care to patients across Ontario

RPNs make up 66% of nurses in long term care



RPNs make up one third of the province's nursing workforce

### SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF RPN WORKFORCE:



- Hospital **35.9%**
- LTC **38.1%**
- Community **20.9%**
- Other **5%**

# WeRPN's Year by the Numbers

**5,800+**

Individuals Accessed  
our Self-Care  
Learning Modules



**300%**

(a 300% increase from  
the previous year)

**27**

**Professional Practice  
Webinars delivered**

**1**

New Brand  
& Website  
launch

**5,600+**

**Individuals Accessed  
our Workplace  
Violence Toolkit**

**5**

RPNs supported to obtain  
their Gerontology certification

**\$15,000**

Invested in students  
through our Education  
Trust Fund

**707**

Direct Engagements  
with Members related  
to Professional Practice  
and Career Support

**15,131**

**Visits to our Career  
Support Resources**

**43**

Presentations  
to Practical Nursing  
Students at Ontario  
Colleges

**13,000+**

**Care packages  
delivered to members**

**7**

Full-day New Graduate  
Workshops delivered



**15,134**

**Members Strong**

**\$80,000**

**Invested in  
RPN-led projects**

**2,400+**

Professional  
Development Grants  
provided through  
the Nursing  
Education Initiative

**5,450+**

Individuals Accessed  
our De-escalation  
Module

# We are Growing

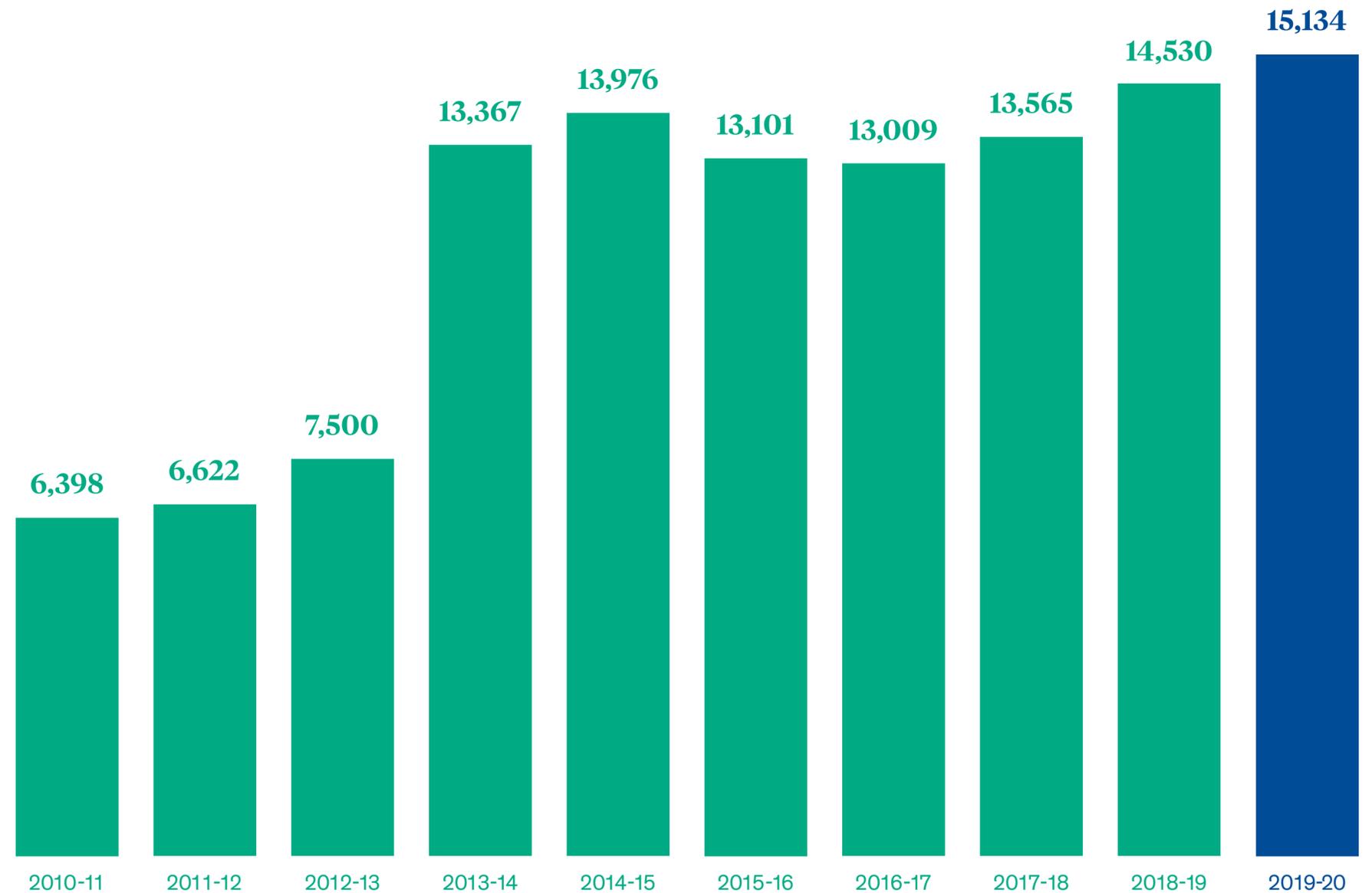
## There's Strength in Numbers

Each new membership allows us to grow the impact we have on behalf of all RPNs. Over the past year, we continued our sustained membership growth. Our membership grew to 15,134, an increase of four percent compared to the previous year.

As always, practical nursing students continue to be an essential part of our overall membership. Our professional practice team continued to engage with educational intuitions over the past year, keeping our student membership strong. This year we were pleased to have 1,263 student members join our nursing community.

## Enhancing the Value of Membership

WeRPN is committed to continually enhancing the value of membership by identifying new product and service offerings. This year, we were pleased to introduce a new partnership with Surgo Surgical Supply to provide members with exclusive savings on medical supplies and apparel.



# We are Celebrated

In honour of Florence Nightingale's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday, the World Health Organization (WHO) and International Council of Nurses designated 2020 as "Year of the Nurse and the Midwife." This unique designation puts a spotlight on the important work that nurses do across the globe to support the health and well-being of people.





### Video Campaign

To kick off the year's celebrations, we worked with creative partners to develop a video campaign that would showcase the incredible impact that Ontario RPNs have on the lives of people across the province. Released in January, this campaign video has reached over 384,000 people with more than 1.5 million impressions.

[WATCH THE VIDEO HERE >](#)

### Nursing Now Ontario Award

This Nursing Week, we joined our nursing partners RNAO and ONA to launch a new award celebrating nurses, the Nursing Now Ontario Award. We were pleased to



participate in the virtual award ceremony and recognize the inaugural RPN winner, Kelly Karges, who works at Sunbeam Centre in Kitchener.



### Wellness Packages

We wanted to do something special to celebrate a unique Nursing Week this year and recognize the incredible work being done by Ontario's nurses in the face of the pandemic. While we couldn't travel across the province to celebrate with nurses in person, we prioritized finding a way to let nurses know how much they were appreciated. We reached out to various brands to secure donations to make a curated wellness package to

thank our members. Thanks to the generous contributions from partners, we delivered over 13,000 nursing week packages to members across Ontario.

### #ThankYouNurses Campaign

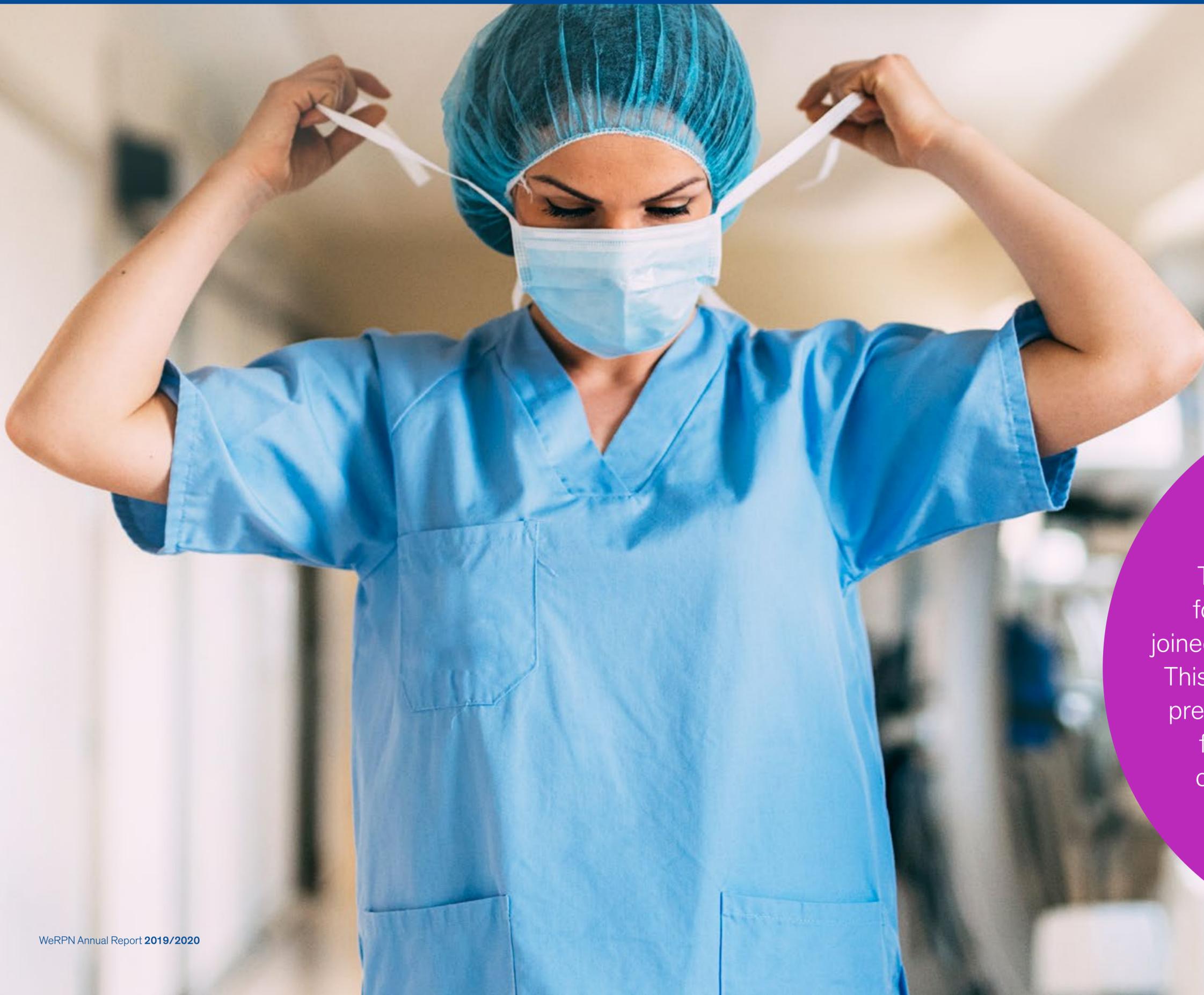
To further enhance our impact and give others a chance to thank nurses, we developed a video that showcased nurses on the frontlines in their PPE. This was coupled with a social media campaign that encouraged Canadians to share notes of thanks with nurses across Ontario. We were thrilled to see the tremendous response to this campaign from nurses and the pride in our colleagues.

[WATCH THE VIDEO HERE >](#)



**“Thank you for the thoughtful box of treats that arrived on my doorstep today. I have been nursing for 42 years, and I understand the importance of standing together like never before. This gift really matters to me. I feel like I matter. For the first time, I feel like I am being seen for the health professional I am. Thank you for that.”**

**JULIE, RPN**



### **Responding to COVID-19**

This year was extremely difficult for nurses across Ontario as they joined the global fight against COVID-19. This winter, the arrival of the pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for many RPNs. WeRPN shifted our focus to prioritize supporting nurses through this time.

# We are Here for You



## Keeping Nurses Informed

At the beginning of the year, we created a newsletter dedicated to providing key information about COVID-19. We ensured that RPNs could stay informed and get the latest news and guidance from the government and Chief Medical Officer of Health through our daily communications.

At the height of the pandemic, we also launched weekly Facebook Live events. This online engagement gave hundreds of nurses the chance to connect, share experiences, and ask for guidance on practice areas under question.

## Standing up for Nurses

A key priority for WeRPN was ensuring that nurses had the tools and resources they needed to provide safe care to their patients, clients and residents, while also protecting themselves. We were in regular contact with elected officials and key

decision-makers to advocate on behalf of Ontario RPNs. From the beginning of this crisis, we pushed for more personal protective equipment and better data, supported calls for pandemic pay, urged the government to prioritize vulnerable sectors and encouraged enhanced testing.

When nurses had questions, our professional practice team was dedicated to responding to their concerns and providing advice.

## Creating New Resources for Nurses

In addition to sharing the numerous guidance documents prepared by the government, WeRPN also developed a variety of new resources to support the needs of RPNs facing a changing work environment due to the pandemic. Resources included a new online, self-guided 8-week program focusing on self-care, infection control and donning and doffing PPE.

**“As always, I look forward to reading every message that comes through my email from WeRPN. Your passion, determination and guidance with everything have never been so important and comforting as it has been during these last months. You are amazing and so appreciated.”**

**JOANNA, RPN**



# We are Innovators

WeRPN is committed to advancing nursing practice and enabling innovation in the profession. This year, we were thrilled to offer 11 Fellowships to RPNs across Ontario to implement workplace projects focused on Joy in Work and Quality Impact and Innovation.

RPNs were invited to develop proposals in collaboration with their employers and offered funding to support the project implementation. Last fall, WeRPN hosted a two-day symposium to bring Fellows together to share project ideas and develop their project plans. Each Fellow was then given six to nine months to complete their projects and received ongoing support and coaching from our professional practice team.

### Driving RPN Research

WeRPN continued to drive research about the unique role of RPNs. This year, the organization enhanced its research capacity with the addition of new dedicated staff and developed new partnerships with stakeholders and academic institutions. Notable achievements for 2019-2020 include:

- Completing the 2020 Research Study of the experiences of Ontario RPNs with a longitudinal comparison to the 2010 and 2015 studies
- Developing a new partnership with Western University and Lambton College to develop a research proposal for an RPN-related COVID-19 Research Study
- Developing a partnership with the Canadian Nurses Association to evaluate the outcomes of RPN/LPNs that completed the Gerontology Certification Exam

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**“This project granted opportunities to self-reflect and gain constructive criticism while enriching knowledge of how to facilitate quality improvement projects within a dynamic workplace.”**

**SABRINA MORIN, RPN  
JOY IN WORK PROJECT LEAD**

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# Promoting Nursing Excellence

As recognized experts in scope of practice and role clarity, WeRPN is regularly called on by organizations locally, provincially, nationally and internationally for advice and guidance. This year, we launched a new arm of the association dedicated to supporting this work.

The newly established **Centre for Nursing Practice** was created to address gaps in the healthcare system, optimize the role of the RPN and improve nursing and patient satisfaction. Utilizing the Knowledge Process Model®, a reconceptualization of the Nursing Process, WeRPN worked in partnership with organizations to evaluate and enhance nursing across a wide range of practice areas.





# We are Professionals

WeRPN supports RPNs throughout their careers, from new grads to experienced nurses. Our career services continued to be extremely popular this year, with growing numbers of nurses taking advantage of the supports we offer.

## Career Development

WeRPN continued to offer free access to the Career Directions program, a practical, self-learning program to guide RPNs as they progress through their career journeys. This year, over 8,800 nurses accessed this online resource.

## Mentorship

Recognizing the importance of mentorship to career development, we continued to promote our mentorship program. This year we were thrilled to have 29 active mentors and 41 mentees take part in the program. We also launched a new quarterly mentorship newsletter to provide tools and tips to ensure a successful mentorship relationship.

## Certification

WeRPN served as a member of the development committees for the Canadian Nurses Association's RPN/LPN Gerontology and Medical-Surgical Certification. We also established a community to support nurses interested in taking the exam with networking and study groups.

## Workshops, Resources and Toolkits

This year, we continued to offer our renowned Role Clarity and Patient-Centered Care workshops. Given the interest from nurses, we also expanded our Self-Care series from eight to 11 modules to improve the user experience and offer more specific content to support nurses with various aspects of self-care.

## Catalyzing Leadership

We continued to offer our popular leadership series. In 2019-20, we offered nine courses, engaging up to 26 participants per course.

## Supporting New Graduates

WeRPN is committed to helping new nurses start on the right path on their nursing journey. To support them in their transition from the classroom to the workplace, we continued to offer our highly sought-after New Graduate Workshops. This year we delivered seven workshops that gave students the chance to create career plans, obtain guidance for resume development and participate in mock job interview scenarios.

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**“I want to thank you for the very helpful workshop. I feel better prepared to tackle my career search with more confidence. Your workshop was well organized and offered tangible resources.”**

**NEW GRADUATE**

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# We are Advocates

WeRPN regularly engages with elected officials and key decision-makers to make sure the voice and concerns of RPNs on key professional practice and health policy issues are heard.

Following the 2019 government commitment to enhance the scope of practice for RPNs, WeRPN continued to be actively involved in advocating for this change to take effect. This included meeting with the College of Nurses of Ontario to provide a rationale for expanding RPN's scope.

## **This year, WeRPN developed a pre-budget submission focused on priorities identified by nurses:**

- Expanding education and professional development opportunities for nurses through the Nursing Education Initiative
- Enhancing career laddering opportunities for RPNs
- Authorizing Ontario Colleges to grant nursing degrees to keep more nurses in rural and remote communities
- Developing a Health Human Resources Strategy that puts nurses where we need them

As a result of our advocacy, this February, the government announced plans to give Ontario colleges the ability to grant degrees. WeRPN applauded this government announcement, which will provide future nurses with new ways to pursue education closer to home and give RPNs interested in bridging to the RN role more opportunities to do so.

Historically, WeRPN has hosted an Advocacy Day at Queen's Park. The 2020 Advocacy Day, scheduled for mid-March, had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. WeRPN looks forward to hosting its next Queen's Park day when it is safe to do so.

In addition to engaging with elected officials, WeRPN continued to contribute to nursing policy and practice through our membership on a variety of Boards, Committees and Groups, including:

- Joint Provincial Nursing Committee
- Working Group on Strengthening Safety and Security in Long-Term Care Medication Management Systems
- Public Services Health & Safety Association's Steering Committee for Provincial Workplace Violence Prevention
- National Nursing Data Standards Initiative
- Nurses Health Program Board of Directors
- Registered Nurses' Foundation of Ontario Board of Directors
- Numerous Provincial Advisory Committees for College PN Programs

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**“Thank you for continuing to advocate for RPNs, provincially and globally, and also being the calm in the storm of many voices and always taking the high road.”**

**2020 RPN SURVEY  
RESPONDENT**

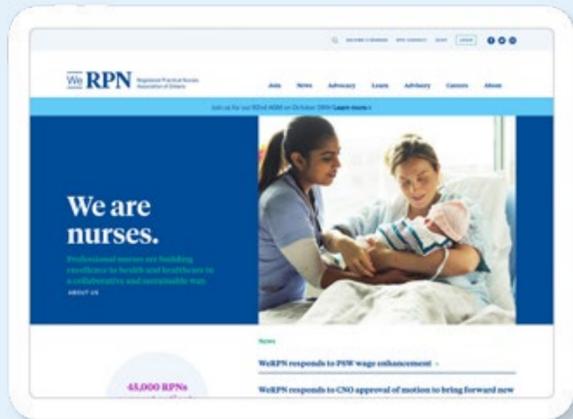
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# We are Engaged

Connecting with our community is more important than ever.

This past year, we have improved our online communications channels, which resulted in increased engagement with our members and nurses across Ontario.





### Launch of our New Website

Last fall, we launched a completely redesigned website to better meet the needs of Ontario RPNs. Our new site is easier to access and navigate. Since the launch, we have seen a 14 percent increase in site users and a 27 percent increase in sessions.

[SEE OUR WEBSITE HERE >](#)

### E-Newsletter

Our redesigned electronic newsletter continues to be a great way for our members to stay up to date on the latest WeRPN news and events. This year, we also introduced a COVID-19 newsletter to keep our members up to date with the latest information, guidance and resources.

### Ambassador Program

Our Ambassador program continued to grow and serve as a great way for our team to connect and disseminate information to RPNs across the province. This year, we were thrilled to welcome our dedicated roster of 42 workplace- and 31 student-ambassadors to the program and appreciate their support in raising awareness about our programming and resources.

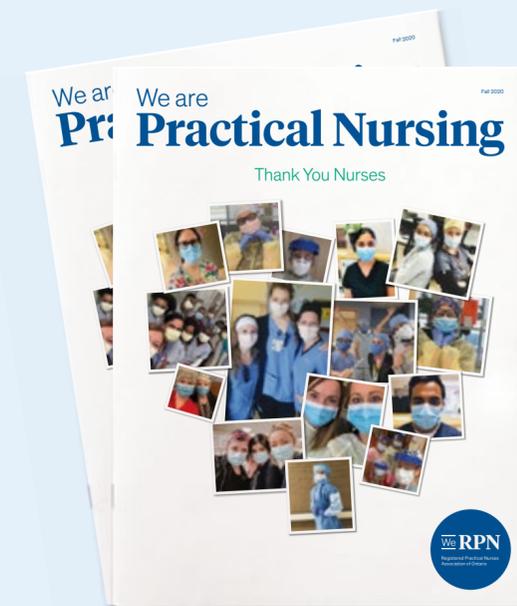
### Social Media

Social media continued to play an important role in keeping us connected with nurses across Ontario. We were pleased to see our engagement grow on all our channels. This year, we were particularly proud to expand our Instagram following by over 80 percent and increase our Facebook followers by 20 percent. Follow us if you don't already.



### We are Practical Nursing Magazine

We were thrilled to launch a redesigned version of the flagship publication this year with the We are Practical Nursing Magazine to align with our organization's new look and feel. Our magazine allows us to communicate with members, share stories from RPNs and highlight news that affects nursing and our health system. We have made it a priority to use this publication to showcase the voices and experiences of Ontario RPNs.



**“Thank you to WeRPN for your continued support for all RPNs, your committed dedication to the hard work RPNs do on a daily basis. We are often the unsung heroes of the frontline workers, and we appreciate everything WeRPN stands for. Thank you.”**

**SANDRA, RPN**

# We are Recognized

Each year, WeRPN honours the professionalism, commitment and passion of Ontario RPNs and their employers. This year, we were pleased to celebrate amazing RPNs with our Awards of Excellence.

## **President's Award**

This award honours an individual, group or organization who demonstrates outstanding commitment to furthering the utilization and recognition of RPNs in Ontario. This year's winner has been a role model, leader and advocate for optimizing the RPN role. Congratulations to **Megan Sloan**.

## **Employer Award of Excellence**

This award recognizes an employer that has demonstrated outstanding achievement with improving the utilization of RPNs and fostering a safe, respectful and empowering work environment where RPNs can work to the fullest of their knowledge, skill and judgment. This year, we were proud to honour **Stevenson Memorial Hospital** for its work in supporting RPN leadership, innovation and practice.

## **Award of Excellence and Innovation**

The Award of Excellence and Innovation is presented to an RPN who has contributed significantly to practical nursing in Ontario and whose efforts have demonstrated

exemplary nursing practices. The 2019 winner was described by colleagues as a supportive educator, collaborator and engaging leader with a commitment to excellence. Congratulations to **Kerry Gartshore**.

## **Preceptor Award of Excellence**

This award honours an RPN who has contributed in a significant way as a role model for a practical nursing student. The 2019 winner **Marichelle Calanza** was described by her student as an inspiring role model demonstrating outstanding competence and professionalism, always prepared, meticulous when researching her patient's health history and showing respect and compassion to patients, families and colleagues. Congratulations!

## **Excellence in the Care of Older Ontarians (The Martha Award)**

This award celebrates the dedication of an RPN who provides exceptional care to older adults in a respectful, compassionate, and professional manner. This year, for the first

time, we had two winners who displayed exceptional commitment to the principles of palliative care. Congratulations to **Victoria Gaerlan** and **Amber Rinfret**.

## **The Michael & Werner Geidlinger Award for Palliative Care**

In honour of the memory of Michael Geidlinger and Werner Geidlinger, this new award recognizes the unique character and exceptional care delivered by RPNs to patients at the end of life. The inaugural recipient of this Award is an RPN described by her colleagues as a "relentless advocate for those in her care." Congratulations to **Heather Best**.



## Supporting our Members

Every day, more than 50,000 RPNs deliver exceptional care to patients, residents and clients. When any of those RPNs encounter barriers or challenges, they can count on our support.



# We are Value

We remain committed to continually enhancing the value of membership. The benefits of WeRPN membership have never been so numerous.

## **Sector-leading Professional Malpractice and Liability Insurance**

Professional Liability Protection (PLP) Insurance is a mandatory requirement for the College of Nurses of Ontario, and WeRPN is proud to provide the most comprehensive coverage available. Our coverage includes access to your own legal counsel, and should you be accused of malpractice or negligence, our Legal Expense coverage provides financial assistance to pay the legal fees in the course of a legal defence – something that is not typically offered by other organizations and employers. You're covered, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, no matter how many jobs you hold, if you're volunteering, or between jobs.

## **Building the Professional Profile and Standing Up for RPNs**

As the voice of Ontario's Registered Practical Nurses, WeRPN showcases the critical role that RPNs play in Ontario's health care system. We establish strong relationships with government

and key decision-makers to make sure the perspectives and concerns of RPNs on key professional practice and health policy issues are heard.

## **Career Supports to Guide you Throughout your Nursing Career**

Our dedicated professional practice team offers expert advice, guidance and resources to help you achieve your career-related goals, including online webinars, résumé preparation, interviewing skills, and personalized career counselling. Newer nurses also benefit from our mentorship program, new graduate workshop, awards and bursaries.

## **Strengthen your Voice Through Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange**

Special Interest Groups (SIG) provide professional development and networking opportunities for nurses in a variety of practice areas. WeRPN SIG practice areas include Gerontology, Independent Business, Mental Health, Operating Room, Palliative Care, and Wound, Ostomy and Continence.

## **Education that Helps you Respond to the Changing Nursing Environment**

WeRPN's in-person workshops and online eLearning programs provide ongoing professional development to support your nursing practice. Topics include self-care, patient-centred care, role clarity, workplace violence prevention, conflict de-escalation, and more.

WeRPN's nursing leadership series offers practical tools and resources to support RPNs to build their leadership skills and influence change in health care. Members receive discounts on WeRPN education programs.

## **Exclusive Savings and Discounts**

WeRPN offers a range of savings from partners, including Johnson home and auto insurance, medical supplies including scrubs and stethoscopes, group benefit plans, consumer products, and financial, health and wellness services.

# Board and Staff

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**We RPN**

Registered Practical Nurses  
Association of Ontario