

WeRPN Annual Report 2022/23

LEADING TOGETHER

The Power of RPN Voices



Message from the President and CEO



As we reflect on our impact over the past year, we are reminded of the immense strength of engaging as a unified professional voice. Despite the worst of the pandemic in the rear-view window, nurses have continued to experience the ripple effects. As a profession, it's more important than ever to stand side by side, supporting each other. Now, as we take steps toward recovery, we must remain strong in the face of the challenges and opportunities ahead. By unifying our voices, we can create a lasting impact on health-care in Ontario and ensure the well-being of both nurses and the communities we serve. This past year, we have made an impressive impact.

Our association continued to be relentless advocates for the pressing concerns of RPNs—calling for fair and professional compensation, legislated nurse-to-patient ratios, streamlined educational pathways, and less reliance on for-profit agencies. We've met with leaders across the political spectrum to highlight the impact RPNs deliver across the health system and urge action on the issues that matter most to our members. We've helped secure scope changes that enable community nurses to provide exceptional, timely care to clients. Thanks to our advocacy, the province has also committed to growing seats in nursing programs.

We have supported RPN education. We've funded thousands of nurses to continue to grow their knowledge and expertise through the Nursing Education Initiative. We've worked with college partners to establish streamlined educational programs for RPNs looking to bridge and supported hundreds of others to bridge through the Bridging Education Grant in Nursing program. Thanks to these programs, we're helping to grow RPN expertise and address the critical nursing shortage in Ontario's long-term care and home and community care sectors.

We have supported RPNs in practice. Our in-house professional practice team of RPN leaders has helped fellow nurses with advice and expertise at every turn. Whether through our personalized professional practice guidance and career support or our monthly WeLearn webinars, we have been there to guide thousands of nurses through the different challenges they face in practice settings across the health system. Our resources, developed by nurses for nurses, including our new cultural competency series, have enhanced the quality of care we deliver.

We have inspired nursing leaders. This year, we were thrilled to return to in-person events to create opportunities for RPNs to engage in valuable networking and professional development. Our in-person workshops allowed nurses to reconnect, improve their leadership abilities and consider how to influence positive change in our healthcare system. These events helped facilitate knowledge exchange and strengthened our bonds as a community.

As we look ahead, WeRPN remains committed to fostering a strong and united nursing community. Our Annual Report showcases the dedication and accomplishments of our members, and we are excited to continue on this path with renewed determination. Together, we will navigate the challenges, celebrate the victories and shape a brighter future for nursing in Ontario.

Sincerely,



Dianne Martin,
Chief Executive Officer,
WeRPN



Dickon Worsley,
President,
WeRPN

Impact report

400+

RPNs benefiting from
direct professional
practice guidance

\$117,150

invested in WeRPN-funded
research proposals + Fellowships

150+ registrants
for the Inaugural
WeRPN Research
Knowledge
Translation
and Exchange
Symposium –
Dec 2, 2022

6

Engaging
Nursing Week
Events

\$15,000

in grants through the
Education Trust Fund

12

WeLearn monthly webinars

Engaging over

2000
nurses

140+

Nurses engaged
through WeRPN's
mentorship program

86

presentations to
Practical Nursing
students across
Ontario

200+

New Graduates
Attending our New
Grad Workshops

We Are a Connected Nursing Community

Each member of our nursing community allows us to have a stronger voice on behalf of all Ontario RPNs. Over the past year, we are happy to report our membership continues to be strong, with over **17,768 members** this year. We continue to engage with our nursing students – the future of our profession. This year, our professional practice team delivered a record 86 presentations to nursing students across the province. Thanks to this outreach, we are pleased to welcome 1,402 student members as part of our connected community.

NURSING WEEK



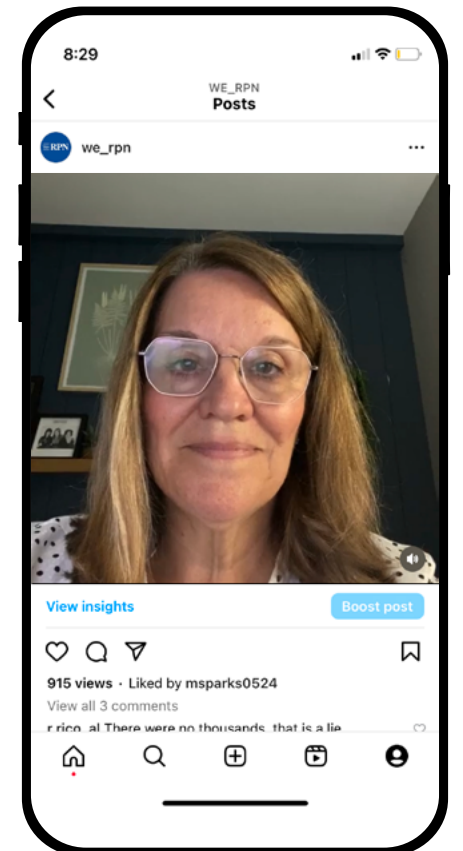
Nursing Week gives us a special opportunity to engage with RPNs across the province each year. This year, we were thrilled to host a series of online events to celebrate our profession. From our fireside chat with RPN leaders and the Chief Nursing Officers from Ontario and Canada to our self-care day and one-on-one career coaching, our Nursing Week celebrations had something for everyone!

To honour nurses during Nursing Week 2023, we joined fellow nursing associations across Canada to launch the #HeyNurse social media campaign. We invited the public, government, and healthcare partners to share stories of how nurses impacted their lives. Our nursing partners included the Alberta Association of Nurses (AAN), the Association of Regulated Nurses of Manitoba (ARNM), the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), the Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of British Columbia (NNPBC), and the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO).

“The session was informative and inspirational. Hearing the ‘whys’ of people who joined nursing was most important for me. Thank you for organizing these events.”

LIVE EVENTS

We kicked off our regular live events on social media during the pandemic to have an open dialogue about the experiences nurses were facing on the frontlines. We continue to host these online events regularly to engage our RPN community, provide a forum to connect with colleagues, hear important updates, and share their insights and experiences with us. We always appreciate hearing from you.



AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Our Ambassador program has continued to grow. It has proven to be a great initiative that continues to serve members in various ways; it allows our team to connect with and disseminate information to RPNs. We were thrilled to welcome our dedicated roster of workplace and student ambassadors to the program this year. We appreciate their support in raising awareness about our programs and resources.

**LEAD THE WAY
IN HEALTHCARE**

Become a WeRPN Ambassador





We are Leading Change

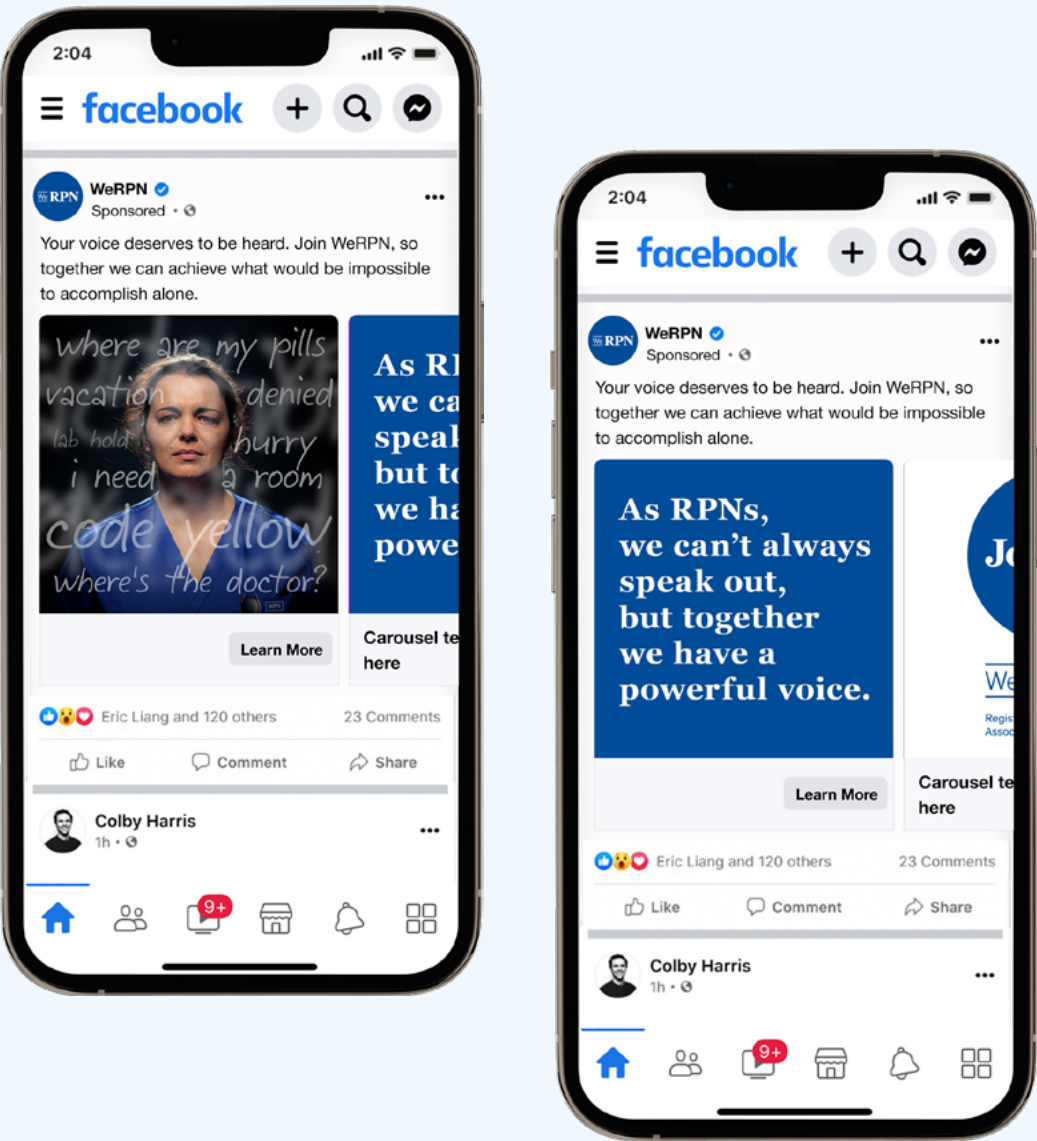
WeRPN continued to champion the shared concerns of RPNs. This year, we held productive meetings with the Minister of Long-Term Care, the Leader of the Opposition and Liberal Health Critic and key staff in the Premier's Office and Ministry of Seniors Affairs to raise awareness about the issues impacting RPNs. Through our direct meetings with elected officials, media advocacy and 2023 Pre-Budget Submission, we urged bold action to address the existing nursing shortage and prevent future nursing losses. In addition to our vocal opposition to Bill 124, which was ultimately declared unconstitutional, our advocacy focused on five key actions to retain and recruit more nurses to build a more resilient healthcare system:

- 1. Establish Competitive + Harmonized Nursing Wages to Incentivize Retention**
- 2. Legislate Nurse-to-Patient Ratios to Enhance Patient Safety**
- 3. Renew Investment in the Nursing Education Initiative (NEI)**
- 4. Expand the Bridging Education Grants in Nursing (BEGIN) to Acute Care Settings**
- 5. Reduce Overreliance on For-Profit Nursing Agencies to Save Money**

We were also active champions to ensure RPNs access the government's promised retention bonus in late 2022 – including reaching out to the Premier's Office and Minister of Health.

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

This Spring, WeRPN launched an evocative awareness campaign to draw attention to the realities of the pandemic-strained healthcare system and the toll it continues to take on RPNs. This social campaign highlighted the pressures RPNs face daily and the importance of advocating together as a united community of nurses to have a powerful voice.



MEDIA OUTREACH

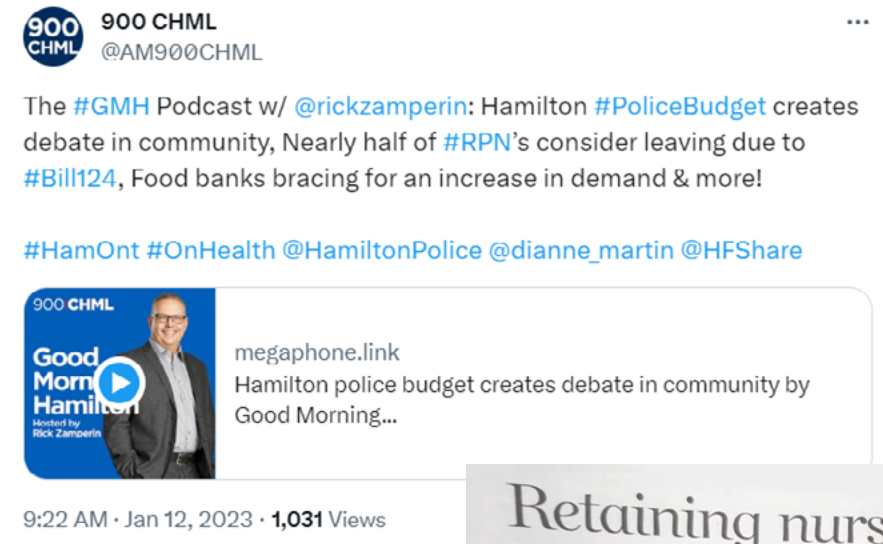
We also took every opportunity to showcase the RPN perspective on emerging issues. We were featured in hundreds of TV, print and radio stories, including interviews with CBC, CTV, Toronto Star, NorthBay News, Ottawa Times, CP24, Sirius XM, Muskoka Region response to several healthcare announcements, including plans to enhance privatized healthcare, poach nurses from other jurisdictions and allow PSWs to administer medications in LTC.

To further amplify our collective voices, we joined nursing associations nationwide to call for more action on Canada’s nursing shortage in advance of historic federal-provincial health meetings this spring.

In addition, we continued to represent RPNs on various advisory boards and committees, including the Joint Provincial Nursing Council, the Nurses Health Program, and numerous Provincial Advisory Committees for College PN Programs. We are also regularly called upon by the government to advise on healthcare policies, topics such as enhancing access to diagnostics in long-term care and staffing mixes

IMPROVING ROLE CLARITY

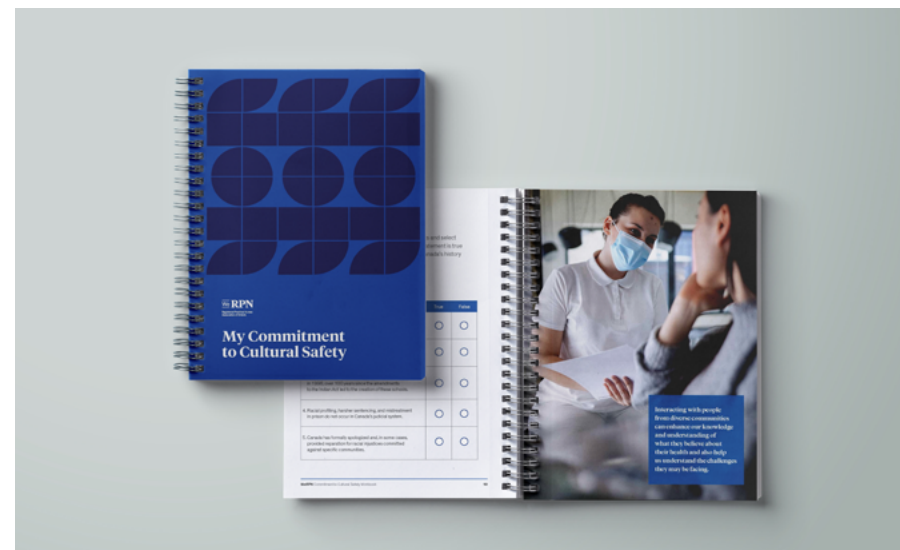
Outside our government advocacy, we partner with organizations to identify and implement innovative solutions to nursing challenges. Equipped with expertise in new and leading practices, we continued to engage with employers across Ontario to deliver our leading-edge role clarity workshops and professional practice advice, strengthening inter-professional healthcare teams.



We Are Enhancing Your Practice

We're committed to providing RPNs access to leading-edge education and resources. Our engaging practice resources continued to be popular with RPNs, with close to 9000 visits to our Self Care Toolkit, 9500 views of our De-Escalation supports, and 3,600 people accessing our Workplace Violence Toolkit. This year, we continued to add more resources to our dynamic toolkits, designed for nurses by nurses.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE TOOLKIT



“This education provides valuable learning experiences.”

As nurses providing patient-centred care, it is incumbent upon us to narrow gaps that health disparities create by understanding the role that cultural competence plays in addressing the individual needs of our patients. According to the College of Nurses, cultural competence is critical to delivering the best possible care to patients, residents, and clients (College of Nurses of Ontario, 2019).

This Spring, WeRPN was thrilled to launch our new Cultural Competence learning modules and an accompanying workbook to expand the available resources that enhance culturally sensitive patient care and support nurses in delivering inclusive care to diverse populations. By fostering inclusive healthcare teams, we are strengthening our ability to meet our patients' individual care needs and preferences. WeRPN's cultural competence learning modules provide nurses with the tools and resources to promote culturally competent care.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE TOOLKIT

RPNs shared stories of struggling with unprecedented stress and anxiety as they faced many unpredictable situations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, WeRPN partnered with Dr. Denise Connelly's research team at Western University to explore how RPNs have adapted to work pressures during COVID-19. The study found that while RPNs spoke about areas of personal and professional resilience, little was mentioned about the elements of organizational strength.

Emerging from this research, WeRPN developed an Organizational Resilience Toolkit, which includes Organizational Resilience: A guide for long-term care homes to support the recruitment and retention of Registered Practical Nurses and a complementary workbook. This workbook provides a framework to enable a comprehensive and structured approach that builds on systems of organizational resilience within LTC homes.



SPRING LEADERSHIP SERIES

We were thrilled to return to hosting in-person events this year. Our March leadership series included three dynamic and engaging workshops focused on leadership development and enhancing cultural competence. Nearly 100 RPNs participated in these sessions to grow their leadership skills and improve their ability to influence change.



“Another great education session! Thank you for offering these training days to support the growth and development of RPNs”.

“I have gained insight into education and enjoyed the social networking while attending each leadership session. A BIG thank you for the opportunities to support, educate and foster learning which WeRPN has provided to nurses”.

“I truly enjoy the in-person because it allows me to interact and network with like-minded individuals in the healthcare field.”

POSITIVITY WORKBOOK

Last fall, we introduced our Positivity Workbook to our Self-care toolkit. This engaging self-care resource provides nurses with various exercises and tools to support nurses' self-care using reflection, mindfulness and other techniques.



We are Supporting your Career

Whether you're a new graduate or a more seasoned nurse, having access to career guidance is critical. This year, we provided personalized career support to hundreds of nurses through one-on-one coaching, career resources and advice.

MENTORSHIP

Our mentorship program helps build connections across our nursing community. This year, our program allowed experienced and new nurses to exchange knowledge and foster professional relationships, bringing our Mentorship Program to 141 participants.

NEW GRAD WORKSHOP

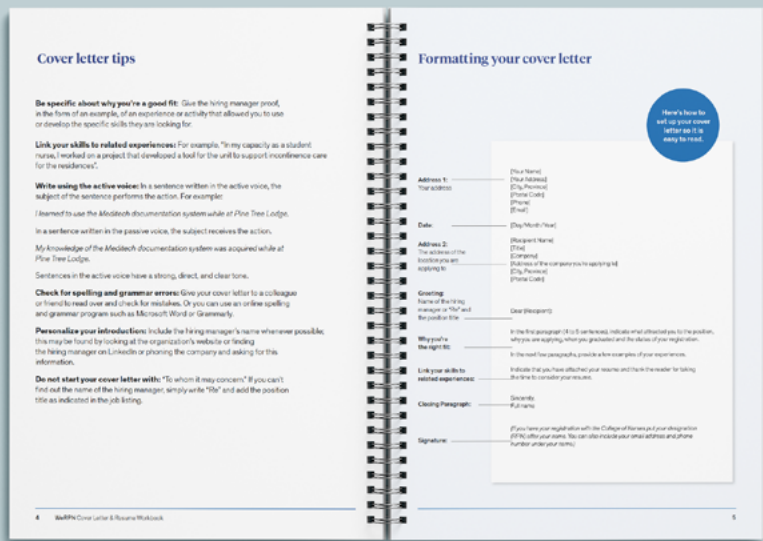
Our New Graduate Workshop offers new nurses access to valuable resources to support their transition to practice. This year, we were thrilled to enhance and deliver our workshops monthly.

CAREER DIRECTIONS

Our online career directions series allows RPNs to review their career to date, access strategies to assist in making future career decisions and learn how to develop a career plan. Over 4000 nurses took advantage of this resource this year.



“Mentoring is an investment in novice nurses and an accomplishment for those who mentor them. It’s about knowing that you’re sending someone out there who is confident and competent, that they will be prudent nurses who do the best they can.”



OUR COVER LETTER AND RESUME WORKBOOK is a key new resource to support nurses on their career journey. The workbook provides templates, examples and recommendations to develop a strong cover letter and resume and help put your best perspective forward.

We Are Growing Evidence

WeRPN is committed to increasing the body of knowledge about the practice of RPNs, optimization of the RPN roles, and the impact and value of RPN interventions on client outcomes across the sectors of our health systems.

WERPN ACADEMIC RESEARCH AND FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

In 2022-23, WeRPN proudly announced our third call for Academic Research proposals and RPN Research Fellowships.

We awarded two academic research grants to projects focused on enhancing the quality of care within healthcare settings. The first project explored the critical need for virtual self-instructional micro-credential learning for Long-Term Care (LTC) staff to advance their expertise in palliative care for individuals with dementia. The second project aimed to improve care for hemodialysis patients by implementing a Patient Optimization and Education Program.

We were also awarded two RPN research fellowship grants. One fellowship delved into staffing stability in Long-Term Care, while the other focused on the Hemodialysis Patient Optimization and Education Program.

RESEARCH WEBINARS AND COURSES

Over 2022-23, we hosted three Research Webinars covering various topics, including the Research Fellowship Experience and thriving clinical practice through clinical practice evidence. We also developed a new online course for nurses entitled “Demystifying research – An introduction to research for RPNs,” led by Ben Hartung, RN, to empower RPNs with essential research knowledge and skills.

KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION

WeRPN has been actively working to disseminate knowledge to the broader nursing and healthcare audiences.



“The overall response and feedback from our fellow healthcare colleagues to this Fellowship program are optimistic regarding our vision of optimized care and improved outcomes for the patient...Outcomes for myself so far have been broader collaboration with the entirety of our Renal Program...These simple yet intellectual conversations have added so much confidence and motivation to this project for me as the vision of our program and its outcomes are seemingly more and more possible with each conversation. I have received a colossal amount of support from numerous team members to not only be engaged moving forward but to be involved permanently as this program continues to succeed and grow.”

Justin Dorie, RPN fellow



“The WeRPN research fellowship award has provided me with valuable experiences to build upon my professional skills and knowledge with an enhanced understanding of the interconnection between evidence-informed professional nursing practice and research. Having already experienced working as a research associate and knowing that I already enjoyed research gave me a leg up. WeRPN’s fellowship has helped me to better position myself as an RPN researcher, which has been widely accepted and welcomed by healthcare and academic communities. Engaging in research is an excellent way to have the voices and expertise of RPNs heard and listened to.”

Jen Calver, RPN fellow

RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION AND EXCHANGE SYMPOSIUM

In December 2022, WeRPN hosted its inaugural Research Knowledge Translation and Exchange Symposium. The symposium provided an important platform to discuss strategies for leveraging RPN knowledge in different roles, building resilience and reducing moral distress. At the event, over 150 registrants heard from 14 invited speakers about the range of exciting research studies engaging RPNs. The topics covered included psychological health, clinical practice, policy, role, workplace culture, and career development.



“Great speakers.
It is about time
nurses are heard.”

“I was impressed.
I was very proud
to be an RPN.”



PUBLICATIONS



WeRPN was pleased to have our team members co-authoring recent publications about some of our RPN-focused research:

Report on fraying resilience among the Ontario Registered Practical Nurse Workforce in long-term care homes during COVID-19

Connelly, D. M., Snobelen, N., Garnett, A., Guitar, N., Flores-Sandoval, C., Sinha, S., Calver, J., Pearson, D., & Smith-Carrier, T. (2023). *Nursing Open*, 10, 4359– 4372.

Implementation and impacts of virtual team-based care planning for older persons in formal care settings: A scoping review

Gao H, Yous M, Connelly D, Hung L, Garnett A, Hay M, Snobelen N. *DIGITAL HEALTH*. 2023;9. doi:10.1177/20552076231151567

EXTERNAL RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS



WeRPN is committed to growing evidence on the RPN role through a variety of external research collaborations:

“Resiliency on the job as a home care nurse: experiences of Registered Practical Nurses to inform recruitment, retaining, and revitalizing this workforce,” funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC): This project, conducted from March 2022 to February 2023, provided valuable insights into the experiences of home care nurses.

“COVID-19: Implementation of virtual P.I.E.C.E.S™ for resident care planning with family to build and sustain team collaboration and resilience for the workforce in LTC” was funded by Healthcare Excellence Canada and Canadian Institute for Healthcare Research (CIHR) Partners Study Grant.

Co-design of virtual PIECES care planning ToolKit for LTC homes: STEPS 3-7 (March 2023 – February 2024), funded by the Canadian Institute for Healthcare Research.



We are Funding Nursing Education

Through WeRPN's Nursing Education Initiative and Bridging Education in Nursing Grant Program, we are supporting thousands of RPNs to achieve their educational goals.

Through the NEI, WeRPN funded hundreds of RPNs to access continuing education to grow their knowledge and enhance their nursing practice.

In 2022-23, an additional 851 applicants received funding to pursue bridging education in exchange for a commitment to work in Ontario's long-term care or home and community care sectors following graduation through the BEGIN program. As of June 2023, a total of 1206 current and future RPNs will receive tuition grants to support their educational goals and help address the nursing shortage in these sectors. WeRPN also dispersed \$1,335,000 in Wraparound Support to 267 BEGIN students who demonstrated financial need.

This year, WeRPN undertook a survey to understand BEGIN's impact on participants' lives. Key highlights include:

- 71% of respondents say BEGIN influenced their decision to continue their education to become an RPN/RN.
- 89% say BEGIN tuition grants have alleviated their financial pressures, allowing them to focus on their studies.
- 70% of respondents share that BEGIN allows them the financial freedom to lessen working hours.

“I can breathe! I can pay for next semester. Such a relief! So thankful for the BEGIN program.”

Trina, Student

“I am a single mother, so my finances for home are for home, not for schooling. Now, being a part of BEGIN, I have had financial freedom. It's been able to keep me going in nursing as a whole. So, it's been a huge help.”

Amy, PN Student

“BEGIN is helping me with my tuition fees. I am enrolled in a full-time program, so I'm not working as much as I was before, so BEGIN is helping me cover my financial costs and providing me with the benefit of focusing on my studies.”

Yuvraj, BScN student

We Are Celebrating Nurses

Each year, WeRPN celebrates dedicated individuals and employers who went above and beyond in their duties, providing compassionate care and positively impacting the lives of their patients and staff. WeRPN was proud to honour these healthcare leaders with our annual Awards of Excellence.



Award of Excellence and Innovation

Christina Khan, RPN

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. Recipient Christina Khan has been an RPN for 15 years, practicing in an inpatient stroke rehabilitation program. Christina participated in the research study “Building Capacity in Rehabilitation Services: Mapping Rehabilitation Nursing Care Practices in Geriatric and Stroke Rehabilitation Units,” which examined the impact and contributions of RPNs to the care of stroke and geriatric rehabilitation patients. Her energy and positive attitude have inspired her nursing colleagues to consider the importance of nursing contributions to the field of research.



President's Award

Shaye Martorino, RPN

This award honours an individual, group, or organization demonstrating outstanding commitment to furthering the utilization and recognition of RPNs in Ontario. This year's recipient, Shaye Martorino, is a nurse manager at the Inner-City Health Associates (ICHA) 's Enhanced Shelter Support Program, where she cares for people experiencing homelessness. Shaye has been an RPN for ten years, having graduated from Sir Sanford Fleming College in Peterborough, Ontario, and is currently enrolled in Athabasca University's post-RPN Bachelor of Nursing program. Federal Chief Nursing Officer Dr. Leigh Chapman, who previously worked as the inaugural director of clinical services at ICHA, described her former colleague as having a natural leadership talent apparent to staff, colleagues and clients alike.



Award of Excellence in Mental Health

Tania Strong, RPN

The Award of Excellence in Mental Health is a new award sponsored by TELUS Health MyCare. The award recognizes an RPN who has significantly contributed to Ontario's mental health field, promoting mental health awareness and providing supportive care. Recipient Tania Strong, an RPN of 12 years, works at the Belleville and Quinte West Community Health Centre. Tania treats all patients equally and empathetically. “She is a role model for nurses and is the first to advocate for patients when decisions need to be made at an organizational level,” said her nominator. Tania actively listens to her patient's concerns and promotes mental health awareness by identifying local resources, such as social workers from community health centers.



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

Amber Potter, RPN

The Excellence in the Care of Older Ontarians Award celebrates the dedication of an RPN who provides exceptional care to older adults in a respectful, compassionate and professional manner. This year's award winner, Amber Potter, initially studied to become an athletic therapist; however, as someone who has always loved enriching the lives of others, she realized nursing was her true calling. Only two years into her new career as an RPN, Amber was promoted to Associate Director of Clinical Services at Park Lane Terrace in Paris, Ontario. Her colleagues describe her as an extraordinary nurse who exemplifies what it means to be a leader in long-term care. “[She] gives 110% all the time.”



Michael and Werner Geidlinger Excellence in Palliative Care Award

Chelsea Gagnon, RPN

In honour of the memory of Michael Geidlinger and Werner Geidlinger, this award recognizes the unique character and excellent care RPNs deliver to patients at the end of life. This year's winner, Chelsea Gagnon, began her career as a PSW but returned to school to become an RPN. She now works in a clinical setting with the Complex and Palliative Support team in Espanola, Ontario, where she assesses the needs of patients in the community and provides support to individuals with life-limiting illnesses. Chelsea was recognized for having helped many patients and families during their palliative care journeys, as well as for advocating for them, providing the best quality of care and helping to meet patients' needs and goals.



Award of Excellence in Research: RPN

Sue Struth, RPN

This award is presented to an individual RPN who has significantly contributed to research in practical nursing in Ontario and whose efforts have demonstrated evidence-informed nursing practices. Sue Struth is the inaugural recipient of this award and has been an RPN for more than 12 years, formerly working as a wound care and infection control lead at Schlegel Villages. Sue has been an applications specialist in the practical nursing program at Conestoga College since 2015 and plays an integral role in research projects within the college's Canadian Institute for Seniors Care. Sue received a WeRPN research grant in 2021, co-leading a study with the executive director of the Canadian Institute for Seniors Care exploring the role and experience of RPNs in long-term care.



Preceptor Award of Excellence

Catharine Case, RPN

The Preceptor Award of Excellence is bestowed upon an RPN in recognition of outstanding contributions as a role model for a practical nursing student. This year's recipient, Catharine Case, has been an RPN for nine years and is currently practicing in an inpatient unit – Medical Care – at Niagara Health. Cathy has been celebrated multiple times throughout her career, including recently featured on Niagara Health – for springing into action to coordinate the on-site wedding of a palliative care patient's daughter at Niagara Health's Fort Erie location.



Award of Excellence in Research: Organization

Canadian Institute for Seniors Care at Conestoga College

This award is presented to an organization that has participated in research on practical nursing in Ontario and whose efforts have optimized or advanced evidence-informed RPN nursing practices. The inaugural winner of the Award of Excellence in Research (Organization) is the Canadian Institute for Seniors Care at Conestoga College. The institute advances evidence-informed RPN nursing practices and promotes nursing research by collaborating and engaging in projects that enhance care for seniors and nurses. All RPN nursing faculty, practical nursing students and clinical instructors are provided opportunities to collaborate on all aspects, from research design to knowledge dissemination, resulting in numerous peer-reviewed publications. The institute also invites practical nursing students to conduct research as volunteer practical nursing students or hired research assistants.

Employer of Excellence Award – St. Joseph's Healthcare (SJHC) London

Parkwood Institute

The Employer Award of Excellence recognizes an employer that has demonstrated outstanding achievement in 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. St. Joseph's Healthcare (SJHC) London—Parkwood Institute consistently seeks to advance care through research initiatives. Their project, "Mapping RPNs in the geriatric and stroke populations," helped develop a rehab nursing standard of practice in Canada. SJHC promotes the nursing profession by striving to adhere to the best practice guidelines for the nursing standards of practice under the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO).



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