



Registered Practical Nurses
Association of Ontario

Onward



2020/2021 Annual Report



Message from the President and CEO

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff, we are delighted to share WeRPN's 2020-2021 Annual Report.

For Ontario's Registered Practical Nurses (RPN), the past year was a test of resolve, resilience and fortitude. Despite the stress and pressure, you continued to persevere, took on expanded roles or were deployed to new settings, worked long hours, and adjusted to constantly evolving work environments. RPNs continued to be at the forefront of the pandemic response, playing central roles in infection prevention and control and vaccination efforts.

We can't thank you enough for your hard work and sacrifice and for going above and beyond the call of duty every day to deliver the best care possible to patients, residents and clients.

We know COVID-19 has taken a heavy toll on you as individuals and our nursing community as a whole. Earlier this year, WeRPN undertook a comprehensive survey of our members to gauge their physical and mental well-being and challenges during the pandemic. The results revealed that a startling 71 percent of the RPNs reported experiencing a breaking point related to their job and 90 percent said their workload had increased significantly since COVID-19. Close to a third (32 percent) said public health policies limiting nurses to work in one place had produced financial stress. The survey also revealed 34 percent were considering leaving nursing.

As your professional association, WeRPN worked tirelessly this year to amplify your voice and showcase

the important contributions RPNs are making to our health system. WeRPN received comprehensive coverage in more than 25 media outlets, including several major television and radio stations, allowing us to share RPN stories with Ontarians and detail our call-to-action to the government.

Our ability to advocate depends on the strength of our membership. We are pleased to report our membership base has continued to grow. During 2020-2021, WeRPN grew to 16,554, an increase of 9 percent over the previous year.

Over the past year, WeRPN continued to advocate to government about the importance of the RPN role. We were active participants in Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID Commission process, putting forward several recommendations for new staffing models, innovative ways to recruit and retain more nurses and plans to enhance excellence in long-term care. We've been active in staffing working groups and pushing for improved access to nursing education and professional development, resulting in the government's commitment to open more seats in nursing programs at Ontario colleges. For months, we have urged the government to extend the pandemic wage increase to nurses. We did this through regular engagement with key decision-makers, several public statements, and media pieces. We continue to build bridges and strengthen our advocacy measures.



While the pandemic stopped in-person activities, WeRPN has continued to offer robust programming for RPNs. Our professional practice team has launched virtual monthly clinical education sessions to support RPNs' continuous learning. We also hosted special events for students and supported new graduates through our workshops and regular coaching.

For Nursing Week, we planned a week-long virtual celebration whose theme was: *Reflect on the profession; Respect the dedication; and Refresh the mind*. We packed the week with clinical education, professional information sessions, and motivational speakers who spoke about resilience, courage and tips for self-care through their own journeys.

We ramped up our communication efforts through a creative mix of channels. Our monthly Facebook Live sessions have allowed us to continue to engage and hear from RPNs about the realities you are facing on the ground. We also leverage our social media platforms to communicate, inform, and educate the RPNs on emerging issues, upcoming events, and more.

Our team embarked on a significant digital transformation— making it easier for members to access their information. This included, among other things: launching a newly designed section of our membership site, introducing a digital membership welcome package including a downloadable membership card, automating onboarding and renewal email strategy and more.

This year, we continued to see some alarming trends in professional malpractice and liability insurance. The frequency of claims for disciplinary actions continued to climb, and the cost of legal defence has also risen substantially. Despite these increases, WeRPN found innovative ways to cover these rising costs for the coming year and prioritized ensuring our members continue to receive comprehensive coverage that responds to increased liability exposures. As a result, we will be keeping our membership fees steady for the 2022-23 year. Over the coming months, we'll continue to monitor the nursing legal landscape and keep you informed about any future changes to our fee structures.

These are just a few highlights of WeRPN's continued efforts to support you. In the pages that follow, you will find a complete overview of the work we've been doing on your behalf.

We continue to be inspired by Ontario's RPNs, who have shown us the true meaning of resilience and perseverance during challenging times. A big thank you to our members.

We would also like to acknowledge and commend the stellar staff of WeRPN, a small but mighty team that ensures we can deliver our mandate.

Dianne Martin
CEO

Suzanne Schell
President

Year by the Numbers

1.2 million

Visits to WeRPN.com

16,554
Members Strong

8,500+

Visits to our Self-Care Toolkit

128 Nurses participated in our online education courses

40

Presentations to Practical Nursing students at Ontario colleges

17

Student Bursaries Awarded through the Education Trust Fund

1.3M

Professional Development Grants provided through the Nursing Education Initiative (NEI)

3

New Graduate workshops delivered

12 FB Live Events

\$20,000

Invested to Support RPN Quality and Impact Projects

6 Sponsored RPN led Joy in Work projects with successful outcomes

1

Redesigned Membership Website

23,000+ People accessing our Career Directions Toolkit

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 in 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.



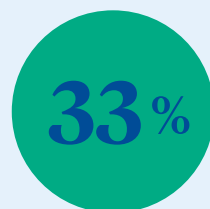
RPNs are the second largest group of regulated health professionals in our healthcare system



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 **36%**
- LTC **36%**
- Community **22%**
- Other **6%**

We are Growing

From strength to strength

Every new WeRPN membership reinforces our ability to have our collective voice heard. It allows us to show there's strength in numbers. Over the past year, we continued to welcome new members. Our membership grew to 16,554, an increase of 9 percent over the previous year.

Practical nursing students make up an important segment of WeRPN's total membership. Over the year, our professional practice team connected and engaged with educational institutions and students across the province. This year, WeRPN welcomed 1,601 students as members, an increase of over 330 from the previous year.

Digital transformation

To enhance our membership experience, WeRPN's Marketing and Membership team introduced new digital options this year. WeRPN was pleased to launch a newly designed membership site and a digital membership welcome package, including a downloadable membership card to serve you better.

Enhancing the Value of Membership

WeRPN is always striving to increase the value of membership. Earlier this year, we hosted focus groups with RPNs and students to better understand our members' experience and interactions with different elements of WeRPN's work, including membership, professional practice and advocacy.

The findings from the focus group will allow us to streamline our processes, introduce new programs and initiatives, and improve our engagement.

We are constantly looking for new ways to grow our member benefits. This year, we introduced several note-worthy partnerships with:

- Canadian Automobile Association (CAA)
- United Parcel Service (UPS)
- Wolters Kluwer Clinical Drug Information Inc. (WKCDI) to provide clinical decision support resources through their Up-to-Date and Lexicomp subscription services



We are Resilient

It was a tough year for Ontario's RPNs who stood side-by-side with their healthcare colleagues as wave after wave of the pandemic rolled on.

The RPNs were stressed and over-worked but they rolled-up their sleeves and showed up for work nevertheless. The past year showcased the resilient spirit of RPNs who selflessly cared for the people in their care, sometimes at the expense of their own well-being.





Sherry
Bruder

Nursing Week

We didn't let distance get in the way of celebrating RPNs this Nursing Week. WeRPN's 2021 Nursing Week celebration combined elements of clinical education, motivation, inspiration and conversation through a jam-packed virtual offering. The theme was: *Reflect on the profession; Respect the dedication; and Refresh the mind.*

The week-long event included daily sessions that allowed nurses to review, reset, reinvent and reinvigorate through virtual sessions with experts and well-known speakers.

WATCH THE VIDEO HERE →

Nursing Now Ontario Awards

WeRPN was proud to take part in the second year of the Nursing Now Ontario Awards. These annual awards, introduced in 2020 by WeRPN and our nursing partners – RNAO and ONA, celebrated an RPN, RN, and NP who exemplified professionalism. We were pleased to recognize **Sherry Bruder**, RPN, who works in the centralized resource department at Brantford Community Healthcare System (BCHS).



71% experienced a breaking point at home or at work from their job during the pandemic.

83% reduced time spent with immediate family out of fear of exposing them to Covid-19 from their work.



34% are considering leaving the profession of nursing and the pandemic has only intensified mental and financial stressors.

Survey Says

A WeRPN survey of RPNs from across various sectors of healthcare showed grim findings.

Sixty-seven percent of Ontario's registered practical nurses (RPNs) said they've never been more proud to be a nurse, but 71 percent reported experiencing a breaking point related to their job over the past several months.

The dire mental health toll and financial stressors on nurses, exacerbated by the pandemic, also revealed one in three nurses (34 percent) was considering leaving this critical profession.

The survey results received substantial coverage in the province's media outlets and helped amplify RPN experiences.

WATCH THE VIDEO HERE →

“We provide support to families whose loved ones are dying or who have died. That, for me, is heroic.”

We are here for you

Keeping Nurses Informed

Maintaining a regular and reliable pipeline of information and communication was essential this year as Ontario grappled with different waves of the pandemic.

WeRPN remained committed to disseminating relevant, timely and essential information, policy updates, and news through various media such as newsletters, virtual sessions, emails and social media. Our weekly COVID-19 newsletter provided curated information, guidance and news to keep RPNs informed about the latest trends.

More recently, WeRPN launched an updated monthly newsletter – The Pulse, which offers a rich variety of content, including RPN profiles, health insights, as well as resources for mental well-being. WeRPN's publications catalogue also includes the We Are Practical Nursing journal. This bi-annual magazine has been a valuable resource for WeRPN members. Plans are underway to offer a digital edition of the Journal.

Our communication efforts also included monthly Facebook Live events, monthly clinical education sessions, and regular posts, infographics, and videos on WeRPN's social media platforms.



We are Advocates

WeRPN undertook several key advocacy issues on behalf of Ontario's RPNs. WeRPN continued to advocate for ways to strengthen our health system.

We were active participants in Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID Commission process, putting forward several recommendations for new staffing models, innovative ways to recruit and retain more nurses and plans to enhance excellence in long-term care.

We've taken on active stakeholder roles on crucial government committees, including the Staffing Accelerator Working Group and Clinical Preceptor Working Group. We have also been pushing for improved access to nursing education, professional development, and streamlining bridging education for RPNs who are interested in laddering to the RN role. As a result of our advocacy, the government has expanded nursing programs in Ontario colleges and committed to growing the number of seats available for nursing students.

We know wages have been top of mind for many RPNs. For months, we have urged the government to extend the temporary wage increase to nurses. We did this through regular engagement with key decision-makers, several public statements, and media pieces. We continue to build bridges and push for RPNs to receive the recognition they deserve.



We are Innovators

WeRPN advanced nursing practice and innovation with several projects and initiatives.

Education and Practice Resources

RPNs continued to embrace e-learning opportunities throughout the past year. During the 2020-2021 fiscal year, a large number of users accessed our toolkits, with over 8,500 people accessing our Workplace Violence Toolkit and De-Escalation Learning Modules and 23,000 visits to our Career Directions Toolkit.

We continued to have robust engagement in our Leadership Series to support nurses to impact change within their organization.

This year, WeRPN developed COVID-19 Education for Healthcare for providers. This free program offered professionals infection prevention and control as well as self-care supports.

Building on the success of our Self Care Toolkit, WeRPN also introduced new modules on Coping with Anxiety and enhanced our list of mental health resources available to nurses.



Supporting new graduates

WeRPN supported students through a challenging year. We increased student engagement with college presentation and coordination. We hosted a virtual session to learn how they were coping in the pandemic and gave information on various services and programs to help them navigate.

Our new quarterly student webinars focused on professional engagement. Our New Graduate Workshops continue to be popular.

“This course could not have come at a better time in my career — a time where change, influence and leadership is apparent to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a proud RPN, the need for change, action and innovation starts now! This course has allowed me to openly discuss issues, identify challenges, conflicts and barriers we face daily, as nurses. I have learned the attitudes, behaviours and resilience it takes to lead and to be a changing agent in this profession.”

JOSEPHINE, RPN



“There are grants to do ongoing education. It’s not just: here are some tools. It’s here’s some tools – and a ladder.”

STUDENT MEMBER

Driving RPN Research

WeRPN’s commitment to growing RPN-focused research continued. We refined our staged research strategy and will be funding new research proposals in the coming year. The association’s research priorities remained on track, with several ongoing projects picking up steam.

WeRPN also received funding for two research studies with Western University.

One initiative is focused on examining RPN resilience through the pandemic. The research team was also involved in a pilot project at two long-term care homes in the province.

Over the coming year, WeRPN’s research team will execute a proven intervention technique, known as PIECES (Physical, Intellectual, Emotional health, maximizing individual Capabilities for quality of life, living Environment and Social concepts including a person’s beliefs, culture, and life story). The

project’s goal is to leverage the strengths of a virtual intervention to engage all members of the care team, including the resident, family members, registered practical nurses and other health care providers. The initiative, funded by a consortium of agencies across Canada, will be piloted at Copper Terrace in Chatham, ON and Vision '74 Inc. in Sarnia.

Career Development

We continued to provide education, professional practice supports and guidance throughout the year. This also included supporting three virtual student placements with Ontario colleges and universities.



We are Engaged

Creating a sense of community was essential in the face of the pandemic this year.

We remained committed to providing RPNs with key resources, information and responding to inquiries. We also realized RPNs needed to share their individual experiences with others and vice-versa. So, we enhanced our communications efforts.

We are Practical Nursing



Resilience.



Website as a 'central' hub

For our members, werpn.com has become a 'go-to' place to find relevant information, sign-up for webinars, enroll for courses, find work opportunities and learn about WeRPN's workings. Our website offers members updated and relevant resources, videos, and information of WeRPN's activities such as advocacy efforts, statements, op-ed pieces and more.

Last year, werpn.com recorded 1.2 million page views.

Ambassador Program

Our Ambassador program has continued to grow. It has proven to be a great initiative that continues to serve us in several different ways. Firstly, the program allows our team to connect and disseminate information to RPNs.

This year, we were thrilled to welcome our dedicated roster of workplace and student ambassadors to the program and appreciate their support in raising awareness about our programming and resources.

"I feel I'm secure that I'm part of a community of nurses."

JEANETH, RPN

The Pulse and We Are Practical Nursing Magazine

With the introduction of our revamped monthly newsletter – *The Pulse*, we have established another node for information and education. Each issue of the newsletter features a: Q&A, a profile of an RPN, health insights from the health sector, mental health resources as well as information on upcoming events.

The redesigned version of the *We Are Practical Nursing* continues to be well-received. The bi-annual magazine offers us an opportunity to feature the voices, stories, and articles on nursing and our health system.

Social Media

WeRPN's presence on social media has been consistent and continues to be an essential tool for all our communication efforts. Our engagement has grown across all our platforms. We've also seen an increase in our followers. On Facebook, our fan count saw a 14.8 percent increase. On Twitter, we saw a two percent increase in our followers. On LinkedIn, WeRPN gained 834 new followers, a 34 percent increase over the past. Follow us if you don't already do so.



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. **The Ontario Palliative Care Network** was recognized in 2020 for the way they respect and value RPN knowledge in palliative care and their collaborative work to develop competencies that reflected nurses' specialized expertise and contributions to end-of-life care for patients and families.



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. In 2020, we were proud to honour **Medical Confidence** for their work in empowering RPNs as proud advocates for their patients and optimal care.



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 demonstrate exemplary nursing practices. The 2020 winner **Shawna Plummer** was described by colleagues as a warm and caring advocate dedicated to excellent patient care and committed to telemedicine innovation. Congratulations Shawna!



Preceptor Award of Excellence

This award honours an RPN who has contributed significantly as a role model for a practical nursing student. Her student noted, **Sara Beatty** was an excellent mentor, leader, and friend. She was someone who created a meaningful learning environment. Congratulations Sara!



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. The winner, **Mike Freeborn**, was recognized for his compassion and hard work and as an RPN dedicated to providing excellent patient-centric care. Congratulations!



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 recipient, **Justine Evraire**, is described by colleagues as "the kind of nurse you would want to look after your family." Congratulations to Justine.

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