

WeRPN Annual Report 2023/24

OUR CARE IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The impact of RPNs

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

As we reflect on the 2023/2024 year, we are reminded of the profound impact Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs) continue to have across Ontario. The theme of this year's report, *Our Care Makes a Difference – The Impact of RPNs*, speaks directly to the contributions you make every day across every healthcare setting. Despite ongoing challenges, such as nursing shortages and increasingly complex work environments, your dedication and skill have driven positive change in the lives of patients and communities alike.

This past year, the healthcare landscape remained demanding, with RPNs facing high patient volumes, increased complexity of care needs, and a workforce stretched thin. Yet, you continued to rise to the occasion, and your care ensured better health outcomes. Through it all, our team at WeRPN has been relentless in our advocacy on your behalf, ensuring that your voice is heard where it matters most.

Through our provincial tour, meetings with elected officials and annual survey, we provided RPNs a forum to share their concerns directly with MPPs. We continued to push the provincial government for better wages, equitable access to education, and the establishment of legislated nurse-to-patient ratios that will improve working conditions and patient safety. This year, we also joined two MPPs to support Private Members' bills aimed at establishing nurse-to-patient ratios and regulating for-profit nursing agencies.

We supported thousands of RPNs to grow their career through initiatives that increase access to continuing education and professional development. Through the **Nursing Education Initiative** and our **Bridging Education Grant**, we've helped recruit and retain RPNs at a time when they are urgently needed. This commitment to professional growth is critical as we work to address the nursing shortage and ensure that RPNs are equipped to meet the increasingly complex needs of patients.

Our professional practice team remains a vital resource, offering personalized career and practice support to nurses navigating the challenges of today's healthcare environment. With our engaging workshops. Programs like our monthly **WeLearn** webinars and new resources developed by RPNs for RPNs, we continue to support your professional journey and provide tools that enhance the care you deliver.

Another way that we have your back is through our **Professional Liability Protection** (PLP). While our insurance meets the requirements of the College of Nurses, many nurses don't realize that other insurance plans may not provide essential coverage, particularly legal representation, if you are reported to the College. This legal support, which is not typically available through employers or other insurance plans, is highly valued by our members.

Looking forward, we continue to be a strong voice to address the challenges you face and champion an environment where RPNs can thrive. We will continue advocating for the resources and policies that will make a meaningful difference in your work and, most importantly, for the patients in your care.

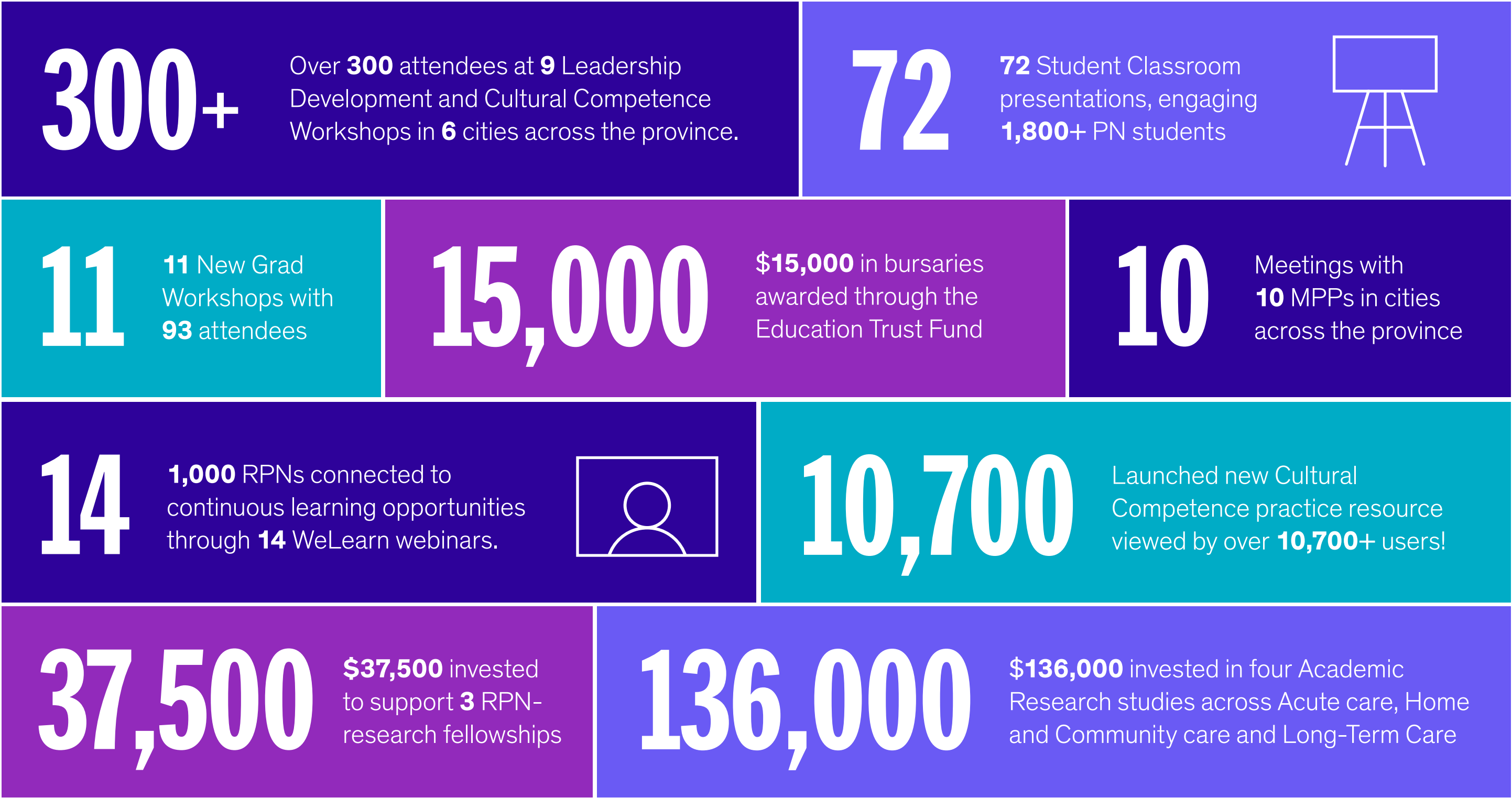


DIANNE MARTIN
Chief Executive Officer,
WeRPN



DICKON WORSLEY
President,
WeRPN

OUR YEAR BY THE NUMBERS



WE ARE DIALED IN!

Each WeRPN member 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 **14,383 members** this year.

We continued to engage meaningfully with our nursing students – the future of our profession. This year, our professional practice team delivered 72 classroom presentations to over 1,800 nursing students across the province. Thanks to this outreach, we welcomed 1,453 student members as part of our connected community.

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Thank you again for a wonderful presentation!
As usual, I always come away empowered with
more information.



COMMUNITY FOCUS



Nursing Week

During Nursing Week in May, WeRPN proudly celebrated the remarkable contributions of RPNs across Ontario. Under the theme *Innovators: RPNs Shaping the Future of Healthcare*, this special week honoured the essential role of nurses in delivering high-quality care and their unwavering dedication to improving healthcare outcomes.

WeRPN hosted a series of free events throughout the week designed to recognize and support our nursing colleagues. These included educational and leadership sessions, wellness activities, and our Nursing Now Awards Ceremony. A highlight of the week was our first-ever WeRPN Book Club, featuring a discussion with Sara Fung and Amie Archibald-Varley, authors of *The Wisdom of Nurses: Stories of Grit From the Front Lines*, and a fireside chat between Dianne Martin and Ontario's Chief of Nursing and Professional Practice Karima Velji on "reclaiming our pride" in the nursing profession. Nursing Week 2024 was a powerful reminder that when nurses unite, we amplify our collective voice to drive positive change in healthcare.

Student Engagements

Our commitment to engaging and supporting nursing students remained a top priority this year.

WeRPN's outreach efforts included 72 college presentations, reaching 1,881 students across Ontario, further solidifying our support for those embarking on their nursing careers. We also hosted 11 New Grad Workshops alongside 14 WeLearn Webinars that attracted 1000 attendees.

In addition to virtual outreach, WeRPN participated in 50 in-person events, such as career fairs, consultations, and professional development days, engaging over 700 participants. These efforts reflect our ongoing dedication to equipping nursing students with the tools and knowledge they need to succeed in their professional journeys.

Thanks to the continued success of our enhanced Student Ambassador Program, ambassadors played a key role in connecting their peers with WeRPN's valuable resources and initiatives, helping to strengthen our network of future nursing professionals.

Participation in Conferences and Events

WeRPN actively participates in various national and international conferences, ensuring that Ontario RPNs' voices are heard on critical issues like nursing shortages, education, and professional advocacy. These events, such as the Ontario Long Term Care Association and Ontario College Application Service conferences in Toronto, provide valuable opportunities for learning and collaboration. By applying insights and best practices from these gatherings, we continually refine our programs to offer relevant and impactful support to RPNs across the province.

Educator Conference

The WeRPN Educator Conference was a pivotal event this year, bringing together educators, students, and RPNs to discuss trends in nursing education, curriculum development, and strategies for improving student success. We received overwhelmingly positive feedback on the sessions provided.

WeRPN Regional Events: Empowering Collaboration and Leadership

This year, we hosted a series of workshops in communities across the province to help nurses enhance their leadership skills and foster effective collaboration within healthcare teams. Participants explored the critical role of emotional intelligence in nursing and learned how neuroscience supports better teamwork and communication.

The workshops also provide an opportunity to examine the connection between cultural safety and emotional well-being while allowing and opportunity for participants to connect with fellow RPNs and deepen their understanding of the dynamics that drive successful collaboration in healthcare.



Dianne Martin at the CHEO Conference

ADVOCACY

WE MAKE
SURE YOUR
VOICES ARE
HEARD



We remain committed to advocating for the issues that matter most to RPNs across Ontario. This year, we led several high-impact initiatives to amplify the voices of RPNs and connect with key policymakers.

Throughout the year, we maintained strong regional engagement with MPPs across Ontario, fostering meaningful discussions on the challenges RPNs face. We met with 12 elected officials from all major parties, including Conservative, NDP, Liberal, and Green representatives. These direct engagements provided a valuable forum for RPNs to share their concerns firsthand, ensuring decision-makers at all levels of government are informed and responsive to the needs of our profession. By creating these opportunities for dialogue, we reinforce the importance of RPNs in the healthcare system and advocate for the necessary support to address the critical issues they face.

Our 2024 Pre-Budget submission emphasized the critical need for investment in nursing retention, the expansion of educational opportunities, and a reduction in the reliance on temporary nursing agencies. Our presentation to the budget committee also highlighted the importance of ensuring a resilient healthcare system that supports both RPNs and the patients they care for.

We are proud to have collaborated on two Private Members' Bills to improve working conditions for nurses across the province. In partnership with MPP France G  linas, we championed **Bill 192**, the Patient-to-Nurse Ratios for Hospitals Act, which would mandate safer nurse-to-patient ratios. We also support MPP Adil Shamji's Bill 67, the Temporary Nursing Agency Licensing and Regulation Act, 2023, to regulate and license for-profit nursing agencies, ensuring greater transparency and stability within the profession.

Additionally, WeRPN submitted key recommendations on Resident Support Personnel to enhance the quality of care in long-term care settings. We also made a significant submission on Bill 135, the Convenient Care at Home Act, advocating for policies safeguarding the roles and scope of practice for RPNs in home care environments.

Our advocacy efforts this year underscore our commitment to strengthening Ontario's nursing workforce. We will continue to champion policies that build a brighter future for RPNs and the healthcare system.



Leading Change event in Kingston

THE STATE OF
NURSING IN ONTARIO:
A 2024 REVIEW



SURVEY

WeRPN’s annual survey, The State of Nursing in Ontario: A 2024 Review, offers firsthand insight into the challenges Ontario’s RPNs face across the healthcare system.

Launched during the pandemic, this report allows WeRPN to track progress year by year and advocate for actionable change to better support nurses and improve patient care across the province. The 2024 survey gathered responses from over 1,300 RPNs and underscored the severe impact of ongoing staffing shortages and increased workloads.

Alarminglly, the survey revealed that nearly half (48%) of Ontario’s RPNs are considering leaving the profession. While this number is a slight improvement from last year’s 62%, it highlights the critical need for change. Among those surveyed, 84% reported increased workloads and 93% witnessed compromised patient care due to inadequate staffing. The survey also revealed that financial stress and mental health concerns continue to affect RPNs, with 75% experiencing financial strain and 72% reporting adverse mental health impacts from their work.

Despite some marginal improvements, the survey shows that more must be done to retain experienced nurses, reduce workload pressures, and ensure RPNs can provide the quality care patients deserve. WeRPN continues to call on the Ontario government and healthcare leaders to implement legislated nurse-to-patient ratios, improve wages, and reduce reliance on nursing agencies while supporting better training and onboarding for new and internationally educated nurses. These changes are essential to maintaining a sustainable nursing workforce and ensuring optimal care for Ontarians.

The report release was coupled with a media campaign and an open letter to the government to bring attention to the survey findings. This campaign was referenced in over 50 media stories, including 15 TV broadcasts, 5 radio, 25 online, and 8 social media.

The media campaign was referenced in over **50** stories, including:



33 Dianne has interviewed with several top-tier media outlets and has been featured in a combined total of **33 media hits**.

Overall, the campaign has amassed over 13 million media impressions.

13M

320 The campaign also generated over **320 signatories** to our open letter sent directly to elected officials.

WeRPN IN THE MEDIA

Advocacy and Leadership in 2023/2024

Over the past year, WeRPN has been featured in numerous media outlets, highlighting the critical issues faced by RPNs in Ontario. We led many of these discussions, offering insights into the challenges nurses encounter in today’s healthcare system.

Through interviews with radio stations such as AM 640, AM800, and SiriusXM, CEO Dianne Martin raised awareness of the pressing issues of nursing workloads, wage discrepancies, and the severe impact of staffing shortages on patient care. Her media presence emphasized the need for immediate and sustainable solutions to improve working conditions for RPNs.

The growing strain on nurses was also highlighted by WeRPN Board Member Sharon Hunter in an interview with **CTV News**, where she vividly detailed the moral distress and burnout nurses experience on the front lines. These personal accounts brought the human side of the crisis to the forefront, helping the public understand the emotional and physical toll on health-care workers.

WeRPN’s commitment to advocacy extended beyond media engagements, with notable legislative support for key initiatives. A major focus was the **Patient-to-Nurse Ratios for Hospitals Act of 2024**, which aims to establish manageable workloads and ensure safer patient care. During a press conference with MPP France G  linas, Dianne Martin stressed the importance of this legislation in safeguarding both healthcare workers and patients.

Dianne Martin and WeRPN President Dickon Worsley also joined MPP Adil Shamji for his press conference on Bill 67, *Temporary Nursing Agency Licensing and Regulation Act, 2023*.

Throughout the year, WeRPN also celebrated significant milestones, including **Nursing Week 2024**, under the theme “Innovators: RPNs Shaping the Future of

Healthcare.” The week highlighted the essential role of RPNs in driving healthcare innovation and progress. WeRPN welcomed the provincial budget’s emphasis on recruitment and retention initiatives, which included expanding WeRPN’s **Bridging Educational Grant in Nursing (BEGIN)** program to support the recruitment and retention of nurses across key sectors.

Finally, in response to the Ontario Appeals Court’s decision to declare Bill 124 unconstitutional, WeRPN actively voiced its support for fair wages and working conditions, underscoring the necessity of meaningful policy changes to retain and empower RPNs in the province.

Through continued media engagement and strong advocacy efforts, WeRPN remains committed to ensuring that Ontario’s nurses are recognized, supported, and equipped to lead the future of healthcare.

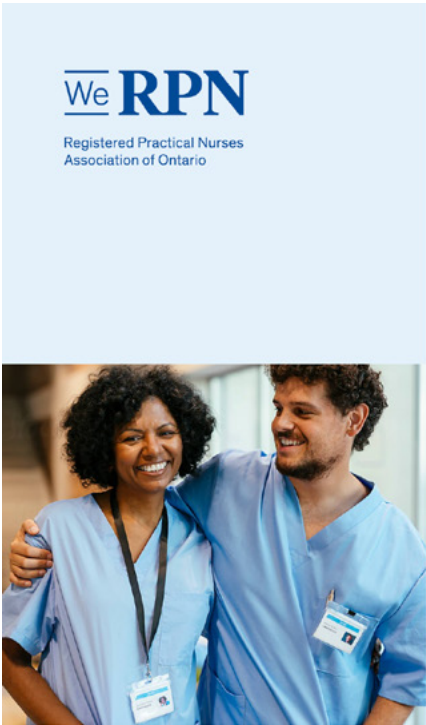


WE ARE ENHANCING YOUR PRACTICE

At WeRPN, we are deeply committed to enhancing the care provided by RPNs through education and resources that address the evolving needs of healthcare professionals.

One of our significant educational achievements this year was the launch of our revamped *Workplace Violence Prevention Toolkit*. Developed with support from the Ministry of Health, the toolkit consists of eight self-learning modules designed to improve nurses’ knowledge and confidence in addressing workplace violence and harassment. These modules offer flexibility, allowing RPNs to complete the training at their own pace.

This toolkit complements our broader educational offerings, including a range of self-directed practice resources to support RPNs in providing safe and effective patient care. From de-escalation strategies to self-care tools, WeRPN ensures that RPNs can access the latest, evidence-based resources. In addition, our recently introduced *Cultural Competence* modules further support nurses in delivering inclusive, patient-centered care. As we expand our educational resources, we remain focused on empowering RPNs to navigate the complexities of today’s healthcare environment with confidence and expertise.



- RPNs are valued members of the team.**
- Role clarity regarding the role of the RPN can reduce the potential for bullying and harassment.
- WeRPN Resources to support role clarity**
- E-Learning course -Optimizing the Scope of RPNs
 - Synergy Report

SUPPORTING YOU ON YOUR CAREER PATH

At WeRPN, we understand that whether you're a new graduate or an experienced nurse, access to career guidance is essential. This year, we provided personalized career support to hundreds of nurses through one-on-one coaching, career resources, and expert advice to help them navigate their professional journeys.

Mentorship Program

Our mentorship program continues to be a cornerstone of building connections within our nursing community. In 2023, the program brought together 131 participants, allowing experienced nurses to share their knowledge and foster professional relationships with newer colleagues. The program creates a space for learning and growth, benefiting both mentees and mentors.

New Graduate Workshop

To support the transition from student to professional, our *New Graduate Workshop* provides essential resources and guidance for new nurses. This year, we expanded and enhanced the program, offering monthly workshops that give new RPNs the tools they need to succeed in their early careers on a timeline that fits their schedule.

Career Directions

Our online *Career Directions* series continues to be a popular resource. It allows RPNs to reflect on their career paths, explore strategies for future career decisions, and develop comprehensive career plans. This year, more than 4,000 nurses utilized this resource, helping them steer their careers with confidence and clarity.

Through these initiatives and many others, WeRPN remains dedicated to supporting Ontario's nurses at every stage of their professional journey, ensuring they have the resources and connections they need to thrive.

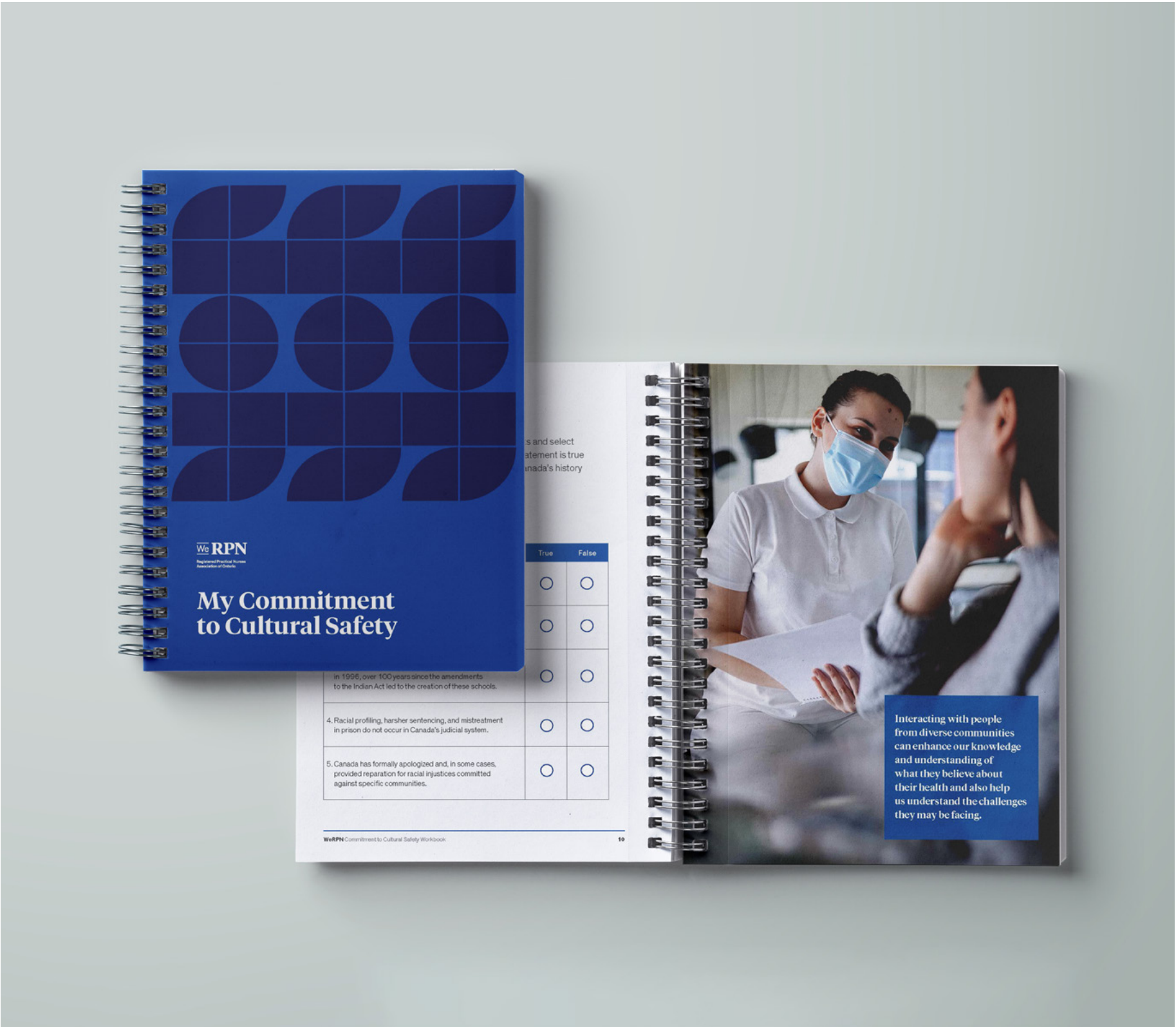


“Mentoring is an investment in novice nurses and an accomplishment for those who mentor them. It’s about knowing that you’re sending someone out there who is confident and competent, that they will be prudent nurses who do the best they can.”

MY COMMITMENT TO CULTURAL SAFETY WORKBOOK

Cultural competence is the ability to effectively interact with people belonging to different cultures. Nurses must recognize that, to practice culturally competent care, we must suspend our own values, traditions and beliefs while holding them close to provide patient-centred care.

This helpful workbook is designed to supplement the WeRPN Cultural Competence learning modules available on our website. It aims to give you a deeper understanding of your cultural competence and support your development of a Cultural Competence Action Plan.



RESEARCH

WE HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN RESEARCH

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The experience of being a research fellow has been incredible. It has been instrumental in shaping the project's trajectory. I am extremely appreciative of the collaborative nature of the research environment, the support and the access to resources have been invaluable.

Research plays a critical role in advancing the nursing profession, and RPNs are integral to this work. By contributing to evidence-based practices, RPNs enhance patient care, influence healthcare policies, and create new knowledge that shapes the future of nursing. WeRPN is dedicated to supporting RPN-led research that addresses the unique challenges and opportunities within the healthcare system. Our commitment to research ensures that RPNs have a voice in the development of best practices, workforce planning, and care delivery innovations.

Knowledge Dissemination

WeRPN is committed to sharing the findings of these research projects with the broader nursing community. Over the past year, WeRPN-sponsored research has resulted in 15 scholarly publications and over 30 professional and academic presentations. These contributions not only raise awareness about the critical role of RPNs but also ensure that evidence-based practices are widely adopted across the healthcare system. Through this continuous sharing of knowledge, WeRPN helps foster a deeper understanding of the profession and drives improvements in care delivery.

Research Symposium

A highlight of the year was the WeRPN Research Symposium, which brought together RPNs, PN students, educators, researchers, and healthcare leaders to discuss emerging trends and share findings from ongoing studies. This full-day event featured presentations from WeRPN research fellows and grant recipients, covering topics such as workplace safety, role optimization in acute care, and improving patient outcomes through evidence-based practice. The symposium provided a platform for RPNs to engage with research in meaningful ways and showcased the breadth of contributions from RPNs in shaping the future of healthcare.

As WeRPN moves into the next phase of its Strategic Research Plan, we remain committed to supporting RPN-led research that informs best practices, enhances care delivery, and addresses the evolving needs of Ontario's healthcare system. Through research, we will continue to elevate the role of RPNs and ensure that their contributions to healthcare are recognized and celebrated.

Publications

WeRPN continues to receive news of publications from past partnerships, recruitment assistance, and funded studies. Publications include:

Tanlaka EF, McIntyre A, Connelly D, Guitar N, Nguyen A, Snobelen N. The Role and Contributions of Nurses in Stroke Rehabilitation Units: An Integrative Review. *West J Nurs Res*. 2023 Aug;45(8):764-776. doi: 10.1177/01939459231178495.

Bruno, F., Nizzer, S., Moreira, N. A., Martin, T., King, E. C., & McKay, S. M. (2024). Developing and Retaining Homecare Nurses Through Employer-Based Tuition Assistance Programs: A Mixed Methods Study. *Journal of Community Health Nursing*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07370016.2024.2314077>

Weiser, N., Topolovec-Vanic, J., Dissanayake, M., Harrington, F., Canzian, S. (2024). Building Research Capacity: A Case Study of a Registered Practical Nurses's Research Fellowship. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership*, Vol 37 (1), pp52-63.

Peter, E., Mohammed, S., Boakye, P., Rose, D., & Killackey, T. (2023). Registered Practical Nurses' Experiences of the Moral Habitability of Long-Term Care Environments during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Canadian Journal on Aging / La Revue canadienne du vieillissement* <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0714980823000491>

RESEARCH

WeRPN Academic Research and Fellowships Program

This year marks the completion of WeRPN’s first three-year Strategic Research Plan (SRP), a major initiative that involved RPNs, healthcare teams and partners across the province. Over the past three years, WeRPN has sponsored 10 research grants, supported 7 RPN research fellows, and facilitated 28 recruitment and partnership initiatives. These efforts resulted in 15 scholarly publications and over 30 professional and academic presentations. Each project focused on one of four key priorities: the valued role of RPNs, excellence in care delivery, practice improvement, and workforce planning.

This year’s call for research proposals garnered an enthusiastic response. WeRPN approved funding for 7 new research studies and 3 new RPN research fellows for the year ahead. Topics include workplace violence management, RPN role clarity in interprofessional teams, and strategies for workforce retention. The approved studies aim to generate usable and relevant outcomes that will directly benefit RPNs and the entire healthcare system.

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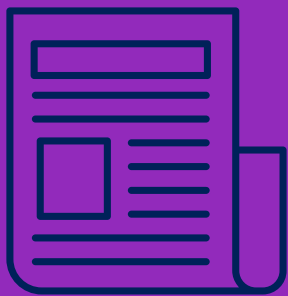
Research grants

7

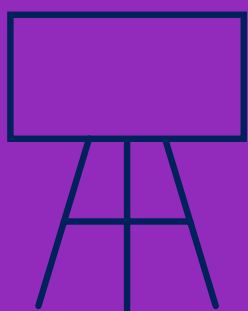
RPN research fellows

28

recruitment partnerships



15 Scholarly publications



30 Professional and academic presentations

7

New research studies

3

New RPN research fellows

WE ARE SUPPORTING YOUR EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Through WeRPN’s Nursing Education Initiative (NEI) and the Bridging Education in Nursing Grant (BEGIN) Program, we continue to empower thousands of RPNs to achieve their educational aspirations, expand their knowledge, and enhance their nursing practice.

Nursing Education Initiative (NEI)

The Nursing Education Initiative (NEI) is an education grants program that supports nurses in continuing education to improve their nursing knowledge and skills. Nurses undertaking professional development course(s) and/or program(s), may be eligible for reimbursement of up to \$1,500 per funding year.

In 2023-2024, WeRPN funded hundreds of RPNs through the NEI, enabling them to pursue continuing education that supports career growth and improves patient care outcomes.

Bridging Education in Nursing Grant (BEGIN)

In addition, the BEGIN program awarded 1,721 new applicants with funding to pursue bridging education with a commitment to work in Ontario’s priority healthcare sector.

During the 2023-24 fiscal year, a total of 2,771 current and future RPNs were active in the program, receiving tuition reimbursements. This funding helps support the recruitment and retention of nurses in our system while enabling PSWs and RPNs to grow their careers.



AWARDS

WE ARE CELEBRATING NURSES

Each year, WeRPN recognizes exceptional individuals and organizations that go above and beyond, delivering compassionate care and driving positive change in healthcare. The 2023 Awards of Excellence celebrated these outstanding contributions.

Award of Excellence in Research
ORGANIZATION – UNITY HEALTH

Unity Health received the Award of Excellence in Research for its commitment to advancing RPN-led research through its Interprofessional Practice-Based Research (IPBR) program. Unity Health’s dedication to fostering a culture of discovery elevates the role of RPNs and improves patient outcomes in acute care settings.

Award of Excellence in Research
RPN – ATTILA KOVACS, RPN

Attila Kovacs was celebrated for his contributions to evidence-informed practice and bridging knowledge gaps within the RPN workforce. His work advancing palliative care education, co-authoring research, and presenting at conferences earned him the Award of Excellence in Research.

Preceptor Award of Excellence
KAMAL KOIRALA, RPN

Kamal Koirala’s empowering teaching style and dedication to long-term care earned him the Preceptor Award of Excellence. His leadership as a role model has shaped the careers of countless nursing graduates, exemplifying compassionate, high-quality nursing care.

Excellence in the Care of Older Ontarians (The Martha Award)
SHARON MEDINA, RPN

Sharon Medina’s innovative, resident-centred care for older adults at Kensington Gardens Long Term Care has profoundly impacted those with dementia. Her dedication to safety and compassion earned her the Martha Thumlert Award for Excellence in the Care of Older Ontarians.

Award of Excellence in Mental Health
ALANA HAWRYLYSHYN, RPN

Alana Hawrylyshyn was recognized for her personalized, compassionate approach to mental health care. Her collaboration with multidisciplinary teams and dedication to improving patient outcomes made her the inaugural winner of the Award of Excellence in Mental Health, sponsored by TELUS Health MyCare.

Michael and Werner Geidlinger Excellence in Palliative Care Award
KRISTIN BROWN, RPN

Kristin Brown’s 33-year career at Perley Health has been defined by her compassionate and holistic approach to palliative care. Her unwavering dedication to maintaining dignity in end-of-life care earned her the Michael & Werner Geidlinger Excellence in Palliative Care Award.

Employer of Excellence Award
SOUTHWEST ONTARIO ABORIGINAL HEALTH ACCESS CENTRE (SOAHAC)

The Owen Sound Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre (SOAHAC) was honoured with the Employer of Excellence Award for its commitment to empowering RPNs and improving healthcare access for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities. Their team-based approach has created a culturally safe and respectful work environment where RPNs excel.

Award of Excellence and Innovation
BRIE MUNSHAW, RPN

Brie Munshaw’s commitment to enhancing long-term care, particularly in palliative care, wound management, and diabetes education, has transformed residents’ quality of life. Her leadership in quality improvement and compassionate care made her the ideal recipient of the Award of Excellence and Innovation.



WeRPN BOARD AND TEAM

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