

A Brief to the
MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION OF CANADA
from the
COLLEGE OF REGISTERED PSYCHIATRIC NURSES OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
November 28, 2007

Introduction

Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs) represent the single largest group of health care professionals in British Columbia's mental health field. They work in full partnership with clients, families, psychiatrists, psychologists, registered nurses, occupational therapists, community agencies, law enforcement professionals and social service providers. The Registered Psychiatric Nurses support a collaborative model and the principles of shared care.

The College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of British Columbia is responsible through self regulation to assure a safe, accountable and ethical level of psychiatric nursing practice. The College is responsible for establishing and maintaining continuing competency programs to promote high practice standards.

Registered Psychiatric Nurses provide services to individuals of all ages, families, groups and communities. Their clients are often the most vulnerable and underserved members of society, with complex needs. Registered Psychiatric Nurses and their clients work in challenging clinical and treatment environments including emergency mental health, jails, forensic services, substance abuse programs and child and youth psychiatric programs. The Registered Psychiatric Nurse's prime objective is to provide quality mental health services to all members of the public.

Registered Psychiatric Nurses are strong advocates for improved mental health services in British Columbia and Canada. The CRPNBC welcomes the opportunity to assist the Mental Health Commission wherever possible. The CRPNBC is a member of the Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Canada which is a member of the Canadian Alliance for Mental Illness and Mental Health and collaborative partners with all health care providers. The Code of Ethics for the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of British Columbia has been recognized as "leading the way" describing relationships with families. (November, 2006, CRPNBC newsletter, page 10 by Steve Bornemann, M.S.W., M.P.A., Psychosocial Rehabilitation Canada).

The new mental health strategy needs to be inclusive of all Canadians including the aboriginal sector and members of the armed forces.

A comprehensive, housing strategy for all Canadians will be a critical component of the new mental health strategy.

In the context of the Mental Health Commission of Canada's first three priorities, CRPNBC welcomes the opportunity to assist the Commission in the following ways.

1. Reducing Stigma

Within three years a Canada-wide campaign to attack stigma and increase awareness of mental health issues will have been implemented and part of the evaluation will have started.

CRPNBC's Response

The strategy to reduce stigma is certainly important but is dependent on the other two priorities for its development and implementation. Such an important and sensitive issue cannot be developed in isolation. This is a topic that needs careful consideration of all the factors leading to stigma related to mental illness.

CRPNBC can assist the commission by providing information from our experience of practice and administration in Psychiatric Nursing in British Columbia. Our members have extensive experience and knowledge regarding this issue. RPNs in British Columbia can specifically provide important information regarding dealing with stigma in a multicultural environment.

The CRPNBC can also assist with the following:

- (a) Development, review and circulation of anti stigma materials in the wide variety of settings where Registered Psychiatric Nurses practice and where they live in their home communities.
- (b) Incorporate stigma reduction into the materials utilized for competencies, standards and codes of ethics.
- (c) Work collaboratively with the Psychiatric Nursing Education Programs to promote the Stigma Reduction Program.

- (d) Utilize the communication network including the website, newsletter, and provincial, national and global contacts to circulate information regarding the Stigma Reduction Program.
- (e) Encourage Registered Psychiatric Nurses to work collaboratively with clients, families, health care providers, schools and communities regarding the Stigma Reduction Program

Response to the Mental Health Commission's Questions

2. National Strategy

Within three years, the Mental Health Commission will have developed a blueprint for a national strategy and obtained a commitment from at least 50% of the provincial and territorial governments, as well as from the federal government, to the blueprint.

CRPNBC's Response

The first priority must be the development of a blueprint for a strategy for mental health. All other priorities must be subsumed under this priority. Input must be sought from the widest possible variety of sources.

CRPNBC can assist the commission by providing names of our members who have expertise in a variety of areas related to the development of a Strategic Plan. This includes practitioners, educators, administrators as well as members with knowledge and experience in working with systems and policy development. The College can also provide policy papers, standards documents and other background material necessary for the deliberations leading to development of a blueprint.

The CRPNBC can also assist with the following:

- (a) Provide input into the strategy for mental health, from Registered Psychiatric Nurses in the four domains of practice, including: clinical practice, education, management and research.
- (b) Utilize the CRPNBC communication network, for example, the newsletter, website and educational opportunities including the world congress for psychiatric nursing and the global network for psychiatric nurses to communicate the strategy for mental health.

- (c) Collaborate with the psychiatric nursing education programs, including the diploma and degree programs in psychiatric nursing, to communicate the new strategy for mental health and educate health care professionals.
- (d) Provide leadership to Registered Psychiatric Nurses, clients, families and other health care professionals regarding a collaborative model.
- (e) Provide leadership to Registered Psychiatric Nurses regarding the importance of a recovery oriented mental health system.

3. Knowledge Exchange

Within three years, the Mental Health Commission will have developed an infrastructure for the collection and dissemination of information relevant to practices that have been demonstrated to be effective and efficient.

The development of an infrastructure to support knowledge acquisition and sharing needs to be in place within three years to support continued development of national goals and strategies.

The CRPNBC can assist the Commission by making available existing data bases and other sources of information regarding psychiatric nursing practice, providing links to other information repositories and offering names of members who would be willing to volunteer as members of task committees to develop and implement this strategy.

The CRPNBC can also assist with the following:

- (a) Development, review and circulation of materials for the knowledge acquisition.
- (b) Transfer of knowledge into professional competencies and standards consistent with the practice of Registered Psychiatric Nurses.
- (c) Work collaboratively with the psychiatric nursing education programs to communicate the new mental health system and to assist in the compilation of knowledge.
- (d) Use the website, newsletter and provincial, national and global contacts of psychiatric nurses to assist in the compilation of this information.