



# Newsletter

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

### JULIE'S KEY MESSAGES



## ABOUT US

**Our Mission:** *To make a positive difference in the lives of older people and the nurses who care for them.*

**Our Vision:** *All older people in the province of Ontario are cared for by nurses whose practice is evidence-informed, relationship-centered and meets gerontological nursing standards.*

**Website:** <http://gnaontario.org/>

**Social Media:** Facebook & Twitter

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Greetings GNAO colleagues! With another school year upon us, we decided we would dedicate this issue of the newsletter to students and the impact of mentorship. I invite you now to reflect on your experience as a student nurse. For some of us, it was many years ago yet the memories are still vibrant; we can remember the excitement and the anticipation as if it was yesterday. When you look back, was

gerontological nursing something you always aspired to do? Perhaps a chance clinical interaction or enthusiastic mentor helped to guide your path? However you got here, we are so pleased to have you as a committed healthcare provider and GNAO member.

For me, gerontological nursing was where my path was headed since before I entered nursing school. Fortunately, since I was one of only a handful of nurses who identified this interest, I was afforded many unique and impactful learning experiences that have shaped my career. In each of these learning experiences, I was met with an enthusiastic mentor who was eager to share their passion for care of older adults and impart the wisdom they have amassed over their career. The relationships that I have formed with key mentors over my career have ultimately led me to my current role as GNAO President. I began my career as a student member of GNAO's Greater Hamilton Area chapter. I was kindly given a book award as a student pursuing gerontological nursing followed by a warm invitation to join their professional advocacy committee. I was hooked! Interestingly enough, when I was approached to consider the GNAO president role in 2013, it was that same encouraging, knowledgeable person, GNAO Past President Dr. Lori Schindel Martin, who had given me the book award all those years ago who offered to mentor me in this new role. Lori, I would like to thank you for your ongoing encouragement and support.

I encourage you after reading this edition, to reach out to a student or new graduate to share your story, share a trusted resource or to invite them to join you at an upcoming GNAO event. As you can see from my experience, when a passionate expert reaches out to a willing novice, the impact can be felt for years to come.

Having learned a little more about my story, I encourage you to explore this edition further to learn how GNAO is continuing its work to nurture students during their journey from the educational, social and professional perspectives. Student and New



## PROFESSIONAL ADVOCACY OPTIONS FOR ASSISTED DYING

In February 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the federal law prohibiting physician-assisted dying. The ruling applies to a competent adult who: 1) Clearly consents to the termination of life; and 2) Has a grievous and irremediable medical condition (including an illness, disease or disability) that causes enduring suffering that is intolerable to the individual in the circumstances of his or her condition.

The court gave governments one year to consider the development of new laws and practices for physician-assisted dying.

Both the Federal and Provincial governments are currently engaging the public in consultations. As gerontological nurses, we need to part of the conversations in sharing thoughts and perspectives about end-of-life care decisions and making the right choices when the time comes for the ones you care for.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.ontario.ca/page/doctor-assisted-dying-and-end-life-decisions-consultation>

<http://www.ep-ce.ca/home/>

## GERONTOLOGICAL EDUCATION RYERSON – DAPHNE COCKWELL SCHOOL OF NURSING



Professors in the Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing,

Ryerson University have been working diligently on a plan to enhance student learning in the area of gerontological nursing, part of ongoing curriculum renewal to incorporate evidence-based content and competencies. The Office of Simulation, Student Placements and Advising is continuing to develop and strengthen student placements and partnerships

within clinical practice settings such as long-term care homes for 4th year students. In addition, the school introduced an eLearning version of Gentle Persuasive Approaches (GPA), a standardized program about dementia care, into the first year curriculum of the Ryerson, Centennial, George Brown Collaborative Nursing Degree Program during the winter term of 2015. The GPA eLearning implementation was evaluated and findings support that students experienced a significant increase in their knowledge about the aging brain, behavior associated with dementia, and communication strategies useful for establishing person-centred relationships. Students also reported a strengthening of confidence when communicating with older people living with dementia.

As one student stated: "I learned the importance of therapeutic communication and validation when dealing with patients with dementia. I feel the modules have definitely provided me with a better understanding of dementia and everything it encompasses, and going through this GPA program has decreased my fears if I ever do have to care for a patient with dementia in the future. I feel well equipped with the knowledge I have gained here to approach and communicate with dementia patients, and now I know what to do if a situation should escalate."

### OCTOBER 2, 2015

Centre for Clinical Ethics  
*Affirming an Ethic of Care: Bridging the Gaps at the End of Life*  
Toronto, Ontario

### OCTOBER 6, 2015

Grey Bruce Geriatric Education Cooperative  
*Palliative Care: Improving the Quality of Living and Dying*  
Owen Sound, Ontario

### OCTOBER 29-30, 2015

Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario (RPAO)  
*AGM & Conference*  
*Advancing Excellence in Nursing: Role Clarity-Quality Practice-Leadership*  
London, Ontario

### NOVEMBER 16-20, 2015

Regional Geriatric Program of Eastern Ontario  
*Geriatric Education Series*  
Ottawa, Ontario

# GERONTOLOGICAL EDUCATION

## ALGONQUIN COLLEGE – SCHOOL OF HEALTH & COMMUNITY STUDIES

Last fall, in collaboration with the Bruyère Centre for Learning, Research and Innovation in Long-Term Care, Algonquin College piloted a gerontology-intensive placement for 4th year BScN students in their fall semester. Over the course of the semester, students had a group community health nursing placement, a group placement on an acute medicine unit, and a preceptored placement in Long-Term Care (LTC). As part of their participation in the experience, students received a free membership in RNAO, GNAO and CGNA, gerontology-focused workshops as well as a free gerontology nursing textbook.

During their tenure in the LTC setting, students were required to complete an evidence-based practice project, where they summarized evidence for LTC staff relating to an issue of concern for staff or residents. The topics addressed by the students included: transfers from LTC to hospital; skin tear and falls prevention; oral health; urinary tract infection diagnosis and prevention; and person centered care of residents with dementia.

The experience was well received by the students for its learning opportunities, however there were also some unique challenges with the experience. Those challenges included: lack of time for RN preceptors to devote to students; a lack of continuity of LTC RN preceptors available; and a lack of student time to complete required projects. On the academic side, identified constraints include: the prescribed timing and number of hours of clinical placements, and the emphasis on the development of psychomotor skills. Lack of role clarity from the perspective of students, nurses and the faculty liaison was also identified.

Strategies to address these issues have been implemented, and the experience is currently running again this fall. For those interested in learning more, please contact Valerie Fiset [fisetv@algonquincollege.com](mailto:fisetv@algonquincollege.com).

## A NOTE ON MENTORSHIP



### SARAH'S STORY

When I think about mentorship, I can think of a number of amazing individuals who have helped guide and direct me in the direction I wanted to go. These individuals really have no idea how special they are to me and how much their mentorship has impacted my gerontological nursing career. I sought out these individuals in my undergraduate studies, my nursing placements, and early in my nursing career. It is because of my mentors that I have found a career that I love. From time to time, I will connect with them, as there is always a benefit of getting someone else's perspective or advice, especially if they have been down a similar path in gerontology.

I currently reside in Cobourg, working at Northumberland Hills Hospital as a Geriatric Emergency Management (GEM) Nurse. It is an Advanced Practice Nurse (APN) position that deals directly with older adults and their families in the Emergency Department setting. The APN position differs slightly from a RN or RPN position in that along with the direct and specialized gerontological clinical work, the GEM also has a number of capacity building elements - with teaching, change management, and program planning being some examples. I completed my Master of Nursing at the University of Toronto, and did so shortly after starting my nursing career. I felt compelled to go back to school after so much of my nursing was spent caring for older adults, yet little was paid to the specialty of gerontology. I believe strongly in the APN position and how it can be utilized to make differences in the lives of older adults. I would happily connect with anyone who sees parallels in their own gerontological nursing journey, or is interested in understanding more about my own.

Sincerely,

Sarah Gibbens (Membership Co-Chair)

# A NOTE ON MENTORSHIP

## ANNIE'S STORY

In a nation that is currently rapidly aging, it is inevitable that we will all be providing some form of care for the elderly, whether it is our patients or our own family members and friends. I have always loved working with the older population. There is something very special about being able to share the same space and time with a person who has a plethora of knowledge, wisdom, and life experiences. I continue to work with this population on a day-to-day basis, feeling no sense of regret for entering this field. However, I would not have been able to get where I am today without the help of various peers and mentors throughout my nursing journey.



In the beginning of my journey, I felt alone in my love for geriatrics given that my peers did not share my passion (geriatrics has never really been seen as an "attractive" field of nursing). It was not until I met some wonderful mentors in gerontological nursing that I started to realize that I am not alone in my interests. My mentors and peers have been instrumental to my ability to move forward in gerontological nursing.

Many of my mentors continue to support and inspire me today, as a student, as a nurse, as a novice researcher, and most importantly, as a person. My clinical instructors have provided me with professional support; they have been compassionate, patient and very directive in my development of comprehensive geriatric assessments skills. They continue to provide me with knowledge on best research and practice in geriatric care and on the roles and responsibilities of the advanced practice nurse. My academic mentors have also consistently provided me with amazing opportunities to network with other experts and with the training and skills to conduct research. I became involved with the Gerontological Nurses Association during my undergraduate studies. A very close gerontological mentor of mine told me to reach out and get involved. "Don't be scared!" she told me. Becoming involved with GNA has been one of the best decisions I have ever made. All of the members are amazing leaders in gerontological nursing; many of which I have become close with and continue to inspire me every day.

Although all experiences have been wonderful, I have been most grateful for the immense encouragement and advice related to future career choices, and emotional support during challenging times. I have found that they all genuinely care about my well-being, interests, and success, not only as a nurse, but also as a person. They have always been so willing to share and to give - I definitely would not be here today without their help!

As the student/new-graduate liaison, I feel that it is so important to have a mentor who will stick by your side and support you, both professionally and personally. This is why we want to reach out to you - students, new nurses and seasoned nurses - to provide you with opportunities for mentorship and peer support from other fellow gerontological nurses. Our role is to connect you with your local GNAO chapter and to help you find gerontological experts and leaders in your local area. Further, we want to be able to share continuing education events with you so that you can further your expertise in the field of geriatrics. Feel free to connect with us through social media, or email us personally to get more information. We are here to support you to build a positive experience and to grow together.

Sincerely,

Annie Lam (*Student/New Graduate Liaison Co-Representative*)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Gerontological-Nursing-Association-Ontario-GNAO-811284002323318/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/GNAOntario>

**BOARD POSITION  
AVAILABLE!**

Looking for

Opportunities to be  
Involved in Your Local  
Chapter of GNAO?

Want to contribute to the  
gerontological nursing  
field?

**FIND OUT MORE AT:**

<http://gnaontario.org>

**OR BY CONTACTING YOUR  
LOCAL CHAPTER  
PRESIDENTS!**