

More *Providers* for *Better* Access

The Saskatchewan Health Workforce Action Plan was released in December 2005. Since then, a number of new projects to attract and retain health professionals have been implemented. Here are a few examples.



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Peer Support for New Nursing Graduates

Nursing the Future (NTF) is a new peer support organization for newly-graduated nurses in Saskatchewan.

“The purpose of our organization is to help the newly-graduated nurses as they move from the role of nursing student into the world of professional nursing practice,” explained Judy Boychuk Duchscher, a Registered Nurse who founded the organization and now serves as its Executive Director.

“There is a unique set of challenges that new graduates face as they move from an academic environment into the intense, complex, and dynamic healthcare system that exists today.”

She said it’s a time of great anticipation and goal realization for the nurses.

“It’s also a stage in a new nurse’s career that is full of stress about job performance and role expectations. They are worried about being accepted as highly responsible, fully

functioning and accountable professionals.” Saskatchewan Health provided NTF with \$20,000 to assist in establishing their group as part of the government’s commitment to implementing the Health Workforce Action Plan.

More than 100 delegates attended the 1st Annual Nursing Graduate Conference in Saskatoon in June, with new graduate attendees from all the western provinces as well as seasoned nurses, managers, administrators and healthcare leaders from across Canada.

“We offer a variety of tools, techniques and technologies to support and connect new nursing graduates to their healthcare community,” said Boychuk Duchscher who teaches undergraduate nursing at the

Saskatchewan Institute for Applied Sciences and Technology (SIAST) and is in the final stages of completing her PhD in Nursing. Aside from the Annual Nursing Graduate Conference, NTF boasts resources that include a 100-page survival guide that provides the new nursing graduate with a comprehensive review of what to expect and how to cope with the first 12 months of professional practice.

“The most important thing to remember as a new graduate is that you are not alone,” the guide says.

New graduate members of Nursing the Future hail from all regions of the province including Balcarres, Delisle, Kipling, Lloydminster, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina, Rosthern, Saskatoon and Tisdale.





Beatrice Ashton, a Pharmacy student in the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition, receives assistance from preceptor Cheryl Kolbinson as part of her clinical placement.

More Pharmacy and Nutrition Students To Get Clinical Experience

More pharmacy and nutrition students will gain clinical experience in Saskatchewan before graduation as a result of a special program created with the support of Saskatchewan Health through the Workforce Action Plan.

Dennis Gorecki, Dean of the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition at the University of Saskatchewan, said that the province's initial commitment of \$218,000 will generate significant benefits for students and for health care in the province.

Clinical experience now makes up about one third of pharmacy and nutrition students' training.

"The Pharmacy program has gone from six weeks of structured practice experience to 25 weeks and the Nutrition program now includes 36 weeks of internship, delivered in a format that is unique in Canada," he said.

"The programs are incorporating new clinical education models earlier in their programs – simulations and service learning – so that they can receive the clinical education placements at a higher level." The problem, however, is that the increase in the professional experience for students does not correspond with the College's ability to place students in clinical practice sites in the province.

"It has become necessary, as a result of the high workload demands on practitioners in our province, to arrange for student placements in other provinces," Dean Gorecki said.

For example, in the last two years, almost 20 per cent of the Year 4 pharmacy students were placed in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Ontario and Quebec hospitals and nutrition students are placed out of province as well.

"Although these experiences are of high quality, they usually result in significantly increased costs for participating students; plus, our province does not gain the benefits and contributions that these students would have made to direct patient care in Saskatchewan health care facilities" he said.

Another downside of arranging clinical experience outside of Saskatchewan is that students are less likely to return to our province on graduation, Gorecki said.

"This new initiative by Saskatchewan Health will result in benefits to health care in Saskatchewan by helping to ensure a good and steady supply of these key health providers," he said.

"Providing excellent opportunities for students to experience the workplace in

Saskatchewan is seen as a significant factor in retaining a higher proportion of graduates in this province."

Gorecki added that providing clinical placements in rural and remote areas in Saskatchewan will also encourage more students to locate to these areas following graduation.

Gorecki noted that preceptoring students is done in addition to the primary responsibilities that pharmacy and nutrition practitioners have in providing high quality patient/client care, and specialized knowledge to other healthcare professionals and the public, who rely on their expertise. This initiative will help to offset their already heavy workloads, and contribute to a positive and healthy workplace.

This funding initiative will help to support clinical education experience for approximately 470 pharmacy and nutrition students.

Dean Gorecki said clinical training of health science students is a partnership between students, educators, and health care facilities and practitioners.

"This important funding from Saskatchewan Health is essential and most appreciated," he said.



Regina-80-20 Program

Saskatchewan Health provided \$750,000 to fund the project that has nurses on Unit 3F working 80 per cent on the floor and spending 20 per cent of their remaining time in educational opportunities related to their work.

A team of nurses at the Regina General Hospital who care for patients with heart related problems is in the midst of a project which allows them to spend 20 per cent of their time involved in learning and professional development activities.

Central to the project is a study to determine the impact of providing the nurses with the liberty to choose what they want to study and how it would help improve their patient caring skills.

"This project came to us because of a unique collaboration between the University Health Network of Toronto, Regina-Qu'Appelle Health Region and the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses," explained Cathy Kyle, a Registered Nurse and the Project Leader.

Saskatchewan Health provided \$750,000 to fund the project that has nurses on Unit

3F working 80 per cent on the floor and spending 20 per cent of their remaining time in educational opportunities related to their work.

"Each nurse decides themselves how they will spend their education hours per month," said Lois Tirebuck, Manager of Cardiosciences at the Regina General Hospital. "It could be shadowing someone in another department or taking university courses."

The Regina project is an extension of a study at Toronto Western Hospital designed by Dr. Debra Bourne and Dr. Mary Ferguson-Pare. Both are principal investigators in the Regina project. "When the word got out that we had been selected for this project, we had 13 nurses within the hospital apply for the six positions this would create," said Tirebuck. "There is

tremendous excitement from this project."

How the 80/20 staffing model was implemented in the unit is among the key actions to be evaluated.

"This approach will address issues raised in the nurse retention literature," said Kyle. "Nurses want professional development opportunities, time to be involved in developing professional practice and research initiatives, demonstrated commitment and support from nurse leaders, and reductions in workload."

"We believe the study will show that both nurses and patients will have benefited from this project," Kyle said. "These types of initiatives can make a difference in improving our healthcare."

There are 47 nurses, who are both Registered Nurses (RNs) and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs), participating in the Regina study.



Helping Internationally-Educated Health Care Professionals

Physicians educated outside of Canada but who are living in this province and unable to practice medicine are getting a helping hand to integrate into Saskatchewan's health sector.

An ambitious five-year project has been launched to identify the internationally-educated health care professionals, determine the barriers they face and then develop a strategy to help them achieve their goals.

Saskatchewan Health and the federal government are funding the \$2.2-million initiative under the Saskatchewan Workforce Action Plan.

"The first step is a needs assessment," explained Dr. Gill White, associate Dean of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan.

"We need to determine how many internationally-educated physicians there are in Saskatchewan and the challenges they face to practicing in the province."

There may be between 50 and 60 internationally-educated physicians in Saskatchewan who have been unable to enter their chosen profession in Canada, he said.

"These are people who are Canadian citizens or are landed immigrants but can't get back into their specialty of choice,"

Dr. White said.

"The internationally-trained physicians face a number of challenges to obtain a license. One of those challenges is considerable difficulty writing their Canadian exams."

The type of exam written in Canada is different than internationally-educated physicians have written in their home countries, he said.

"For example, we use multiple choice questions which means that they must have very good understanding of the English language and an understanding of the exam format," Dr. White said. "Most of the internationally-educated physicians write essay-style exams to earn their degrees."

Physicians from the Middle East and the Ukraine are among those who are having the greatest challenges in getting licensed now.

"We want to help them, but the first step is to identify who they are," he said.

Another part of the five-year plan is to identify the specific barriers that are keeping the internationally-educated health care professionals from succeeding and

suggestions of how to help them.

Other components include developing tools to assess how ready the internationally-educated health professional is to practice or become involved in residency training.

The primary objective, however, remains finding ways to minimize barriers to employ health care professionals educated outside of Canada which will have a positive impact on Saskatchewan's health care system.



Dr. Gill White, Associate Dean of Medicine
University of Saskatchewan

18 Begin LPN Course on Kawacatoose First Nation

Eighteen students have begun training on the Kawacatoose First Nation to become Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs).

"We believe it's the first time in Canada that First Nations people have been able to take this type of training without having to leave home," explained Stan Asapace, Post Secondary Coordinator for Kawacatoose First Nation.

"That's why it's such a big deal for us." He said the program began two years ago with a need assessment of jobs in the area.

"We recognized there would be a shortage of nurses in the province," he said. "So, we began looking at where the best place for training would be."

Several post-secondary institutions were approached before the Kawacatoose First

Nation and SIAST reached an agreement to deliver the two-year, LPN program at the Kawacatoose First Nation Training Facility in Quinton, about 120 kilometres north of Regina.

There are 10 students from Kawacatoose enrolled in the LPN course while others are from the nearby First Nations of Gordon, Fishing Lake, Yellow Quill and Muskowekwan.

Saskatchewan Health provided bursaries to the 18 students to assist with tuition costs under the Health Workforce Action Plan.

The Kawacatoose-based LPN program will be offered a second time starting in 2008.

SIAST instructors travel to Quinton to offer the course's theory component and skills lab.

"The clinical component of the program takes place at hospitals and long-term care facilities in Raymore, Wynyard, Yorkton, Melville, Lestock, and the Fort Qu'Appelle All Nations Healing Hospital," Asapace said.

The LPN program is not the band's first experience offering a training program in the community, he said.

Kawacatoose First Nation completed a four-year education program earlier this year with the University of Regina, which resulted in 19 graduates from the program.

The Kawacatoose Reserve is near the communities of Raymore, Quinton, and Punnichy. The reserve covers 8,248 hectares, with a population of 2,210 people of which about 1,000 live on the reserve.