

## From the College

### Bringing the Science of Patient Safety to Alberta LPN's

The mission of the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta is: "To lead and regulate the profession in a manner that protects and serves the public through excellence in Practical Nursing." Supporting our members in practice is part of this role and we recognize that more can be done today to promote the science of patient safety.

Patients and families expect to receive care that promotes health and well-being. They do not expect to be harmed during the care process. Yet the literature paints a sobering picture and tells us that healthcare is not as safe as it should be. Every day, one in ten patients worldwide is harmed by the same care that is supposed to provide comfort and healing (World Health Organization, 2007).

In healthcare environments, the typical reaction when someone makes an error is to assign blame. Rarely are errors fully examined to determine the root cause of *why the error happened*. Rather, we tend to deal merely with *the fact that an error has happened*. However, health professionals make mistakes for a variety of reasons that have little to do with lack of good intention or knowledge (Henriksen et al, 2008). There is substantial evidence which demonstrates that system weaknesses can create error-provoking situations where even the most educated, the most careful, and the most experienced care provider will make a mistake.

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In 2008, the Canadian Patient Safety Institute released a competency framework and series of safety competencies applicable to all healthcare professionals while in training and for all care providers in the workforce as part of continuing education. Many of these competencies introduce ***the science of patient safety*** which is a new body of knowledge that has entered healthcare.

The science of patient safety looks at human performance and safety from a broader systems perspective. (This is detailed in "The Safety Net" feature in this issue of CARE.)

CLPNA views the science of patient safety as a priority in the education of our membership. Whether at the front line of patient care or in leadership roles, LPN's with knowledge of patient safety from a systems approach and with a clear and strong nursing voice to address system problems will improve patient safety and quality care.

The CLPNA action plan related to the science of patient safety includes:

1. Adding relevant competencies to the Competency Profile for LPN's.
2. Working with education institutions in the province to add this new safety science knowledge into curriculum for students, and for LPN's in the workforce as continuing competency.
3. Providing learning resources to the CLPNA Council and conduct committees.
4. Partnering with other stakeholders to mobilize broader action plans as appropriate.

Together, the Canadian Patient Safety Institute, the Health Quality Council of Alberta, government, education institutions, and the health sector can advance essential safety science knowledge at multiple levels to keep patients safe from harm. CLPNA strongly supports increased integration of quality improvement, leadership, and risk management competencies into the scope of practice of the LPN. You comprise one of the largest groups of health care providers in the workforce and are in the position to promote patient safety and help to build a safer healthcare system for all Albertans.

*Hugh Pedersen, President, and Linda Stanger, Executive Director*

### **References**

World Health Organization. (2007). 10 Facts on Patient Safety. Retrieved October 12, 2009 from [http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/patient\\_safety/en/](http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/patient_safety/en/)

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