



periOperative Registered Nurses Association of Ontario
Registered Nurse First Assistant

Report to ORNAO Board
June 9, 2007

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There are currently 80 fully educated RNFAs in Ontario of which 73 are available to work.

On May 3, 2006 the McGuinty Liberal Government announced that it was launching a new health human resources strategy. Four new roles in areas of need are being created, including what the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) called 'Surgical First Assistant'.

A meeting occurred on September 22, 2006 with the Senior Policy Analyst of the Nursing Secretariat of the Ministry of Health and the Chair of the ORNAO RNFA Interest Group to address how RNFAs can help address the shortage of surgical assistants and potentially help decrease surgical waiting times for patients. In Ontario, decreasing wait times for patients awaiting hip and knee joint replacement is a major impetus. The last 7 full-time RNFA positions posted in 2006 were in orthopaedics, a change from the past where cardiac surgery was where RNFA positions were available.

In September 2006 a survey was sent to 40 hospitals with high joint replacement volumes by the Ministry of Health Nursing Secretariat's office, asking about the RNFA role. It was deemed that many hospitals were supportive of the role and offers were made to 30 hospitals. The offer was to fund 50% of a RNFA's salary and benefits for the period of 2 years in order to evaluate the effectiveness of RNFAs, specifically in orthopaedics. Fifteen hospitals to date have accepted this offer and an additional 30+ RNFA positions are to be created starting in January 2007.

- At present, 21 RNFAs have full-time positions and there are 7 full-time vacancies [Total 28]
- There are 7 part-time RNFA positions
- There are 2 RNFAs on maternity leave

The ORNAO RNFA website www.rnfa-ontario.ca continues to be an excellent resource for RNFAs and those interested in the role in Ontario, Canada and abroad. It is updated and maintained on a regular basis.

On February 28, 2007 The Chatham Daily News published an article featuring RNFA Colleen O'Neill entitled 'Nurse has new role in surgery'.

The ORNAO RNFA Interest Group continues to be an associate interest group of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario and had an exhibit displayed at the RNAO AGM on Friday April 20, 2007. During Nursing Week, RNFAs at Trillium Health Centre and Southlake Regional Health System participated in RNAO's 'Take Your MPP to Work' campaign.

The ORNAO RNFA Interest Group participated in the panel presentation at the ORNAC conference 'RNFA Presents: The Evolution of the RNFA Role in Canada. Ontario is a leader in Canadian RNFA initiatives.

The group continues to communicate predominantly via email with bimonthly meetings held at Trillium Health Centre, Mississauga, Ontario. Teleconferencing (courtesy of Trillium Health Centre) has been available to those not able to physically attend the RNFA Interest Group meetings for the past two meetings.

The group is selling RNFA pins and lanyards to generate some income to help support the operational costs of the group and website. The group gratefully acknowledges any financial support that they have received from the ORNAO board in the past.

Respectfully submitted by
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