The National Stroke Nursing Council: A nursing call for action

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Submitted on behalf of the National Stroke Nursing Council

Abstract

Nursing is fundamental to the care of stroke patients. From the acute setting all the way to rehabilitation and community reintegration, nursing is there. Having well-educated and highly skilled nurses to monitor and care for stroke patients is crucial. Equally important is the collaboration of colleagues at a national level to facilitate and disseminate research and best practice guidelines across Canada. The National Stroke Nursing Council aims to fill this role.

Stroke nurses from across Canada were invited to a national forum in 2005, hosted by the Canadian Stroke Network. The focus of this forum was to elucidate issues of concern to nurses across the stroke care continuum in relation to a Canadian Stroke Strategy. Subsequent to this forum, a cadre of nurses, after undergoing a rigorous screening process, were selected to form the inaugural National Stroke Nursing Council (NSNC). With ongoing support from the Canadian Stroke Network, the mandate of the NSNC is to promote leadership, communication, advocacy, education and nursing research in the field of stroke.

National Stroke Nursing Council

Background

The National Stroke Nursing Council (NSNC) was established in 2005 with the support of the Canadian Stroke Network, with a mandate to promote leadership, communication, advocacy, education and nursing research in the field of stroke. The council works to build understanding of the critical role of Canadian stroke nurses, to give a voice to experiences on the frontline and to support the vision of the Canadian Stroke Strategy by disseminating information about best practices. In addition, the NSNC provides a forum for stroke nursing issues at local, regional, provincial and national levels (National Stroke Nursing Council, 2007).

Objectives

The NSNC members developed four objectives as part of their mandate and to provide a focus for council activities. These objectives were based on data obtained from the original nursing forum proceedings and included: (1) building a nationally recognized accessible stroke nursing network, (2) dissemination of information and best practice standards to stroke nurses, (3) facilitating the implementation of stroke best practices across the continuum of care, and (4) promotion of the value and understanding of the various nursing roles in stroke care.

Further information

Currently, stroke is the third leading cause of death in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2003). Building a nationally recognized, accessible stroke nursing system enables networking amongst nurses specializing in stroke care. Networking provides opportunities to increase awareness of current research, health promotion and best practices in stroke care. As well, an extensive and visible network allows stroke nurses opportunities to participate in national- and provincial-level stroke strategy committees; collaborate on provincial and national stroke research projects, thus promoting interest in nursing research; and to liaise with colleagues across the country to promote the vision of the Canadian Stroke Strategy.

As a centralized source of information, the NSNC provides up-to-date information about stroke care and practice across the country. This helps to increase awareness and ensure national standards for stroke care are recognized across Canada, as recommended by the Canadian Stroke Network, Canadian Stroke Strategy and Canadian Association of Neuroscience Nurses (CANN). The NSNC aims for the highest standards of care for stroke patients achieved through evidence-based nursing practice. Through dissemination of current best practice standards, and information helpful to nurses in fulfilling the roles of care-providers and educators, a network of support that fosters continuous learning was constructed. This will also help to promote ongoing nursing research across Canada, aimed at advancing patient care by answering questions nurses have about nursing practice and patient outcomes.

The NSNC facilitates the implementation of stroke best practices across the continuum of care through sharing ideas and efforts nationally. Health promotion and patient care based on best practice in stroke units, stroke prevention clinics and community health organizations are national goals on which nurses can collaborate. Being aware of current best practice standards and actively engaging in best practices in each unique patient care setting will allow opportunities for stroke nurses to enhance patient care, ensuring patients’ individual needs are addressed.

An essential role of the NSNC is promoting the understanding of the various nursing roles and increasing awareness of the value of nurses in stroke care. Nurses make profound contributions to stroke patients through their skill and expertise. Stroke nurses specialize in acute, sub-acute, rehabilitative and chronic care in a variety of roles, including staff nurses, Advanced Practice Nurses (APN), educators, nurse researchers and managers. Stroke nurses are instrumental in ensuring the best possible outcomes are achieved by the stroke patients entering into our care, through the implementation of the nursing process at the bedside, the education of patients, families and staff, and engaging in advanced nursing practice, nursing research and the management of resources. The Canadian Association of
Neuroscience Nurses (CANN) has endorsed the goals of the National Stroke Nursing Council. The mission and vision of the NSNC are in keeping with CANN's mission. As the national organization representing neuroscience nurses in Canada, CANN has committed to supporting the work of the NSNC.

In June 2000, the membership of CANN passed a resolution to adopt a position statement on stroke. Since that time, CANN members have been active on many national and provincial committees that contain a stroke mandate. In June 2006, the CANN board of directors voted unanimously to include a specific representative on the board who will carry the portfolio of stroke. That person will be a member of the NSNC.

CANN Mission Statement
“The Canadian Association of Neuroscience Nurses (CANN) sets standards of practice and promotes continuing professional education and research. Members collaborate with individuals, families, interdisciplinary teams and communities to prevent illness and to improve health outcomes for people with, or at risk for, neurological disorders.”

CANN Position Statement on Stroke
“CANN promotes attitudinal changes through education and encourages the ongoing development and use of evidence-based best practice guidelines for patients and their families across the continuum of stroke care. We participate in partnerships to strengthen networks that facilitate access to standardized stroke care throughout Canada” (June 2000).

The CANN board of directors believes that stroke care is important and needs to be supported. The directors invite nurses to join the association and support the work of the National Stroke Nursing Council and Canadian Stroke Network.

References

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