

**MEMBERS' VOICES: April 1 – September 30, 2009**  
**Speaking out for Health: Speaking out for Nursing**

**SUBMITTED BY:**  
**OHNIG – Occupational Health Nurse Interest Group**  
**Chairperson - Jill King**

**IMPORTANT!** Please note that this report may be made available to members through the *Members Only* section on RNAO's website. PLEASE BE SURE YOU OBTAIN PERMISSION FROM INDIVIDUALS YOU NAME IN YOUR REPORT.

### POLICY/POLITICAL ACTIVITY

OHNIG was asked by RNAO Senior Economist Kim Jurvi to consider attending an all day Technical Workshop being held by the Ministry of the Environment on July 16, 2009 in the Ontario Room, B1-Hepburn Block, 77 Wellesley Street, Toronto.

OHNIG with their health and safety experience could participate in the workshop on Bill 167, the Toxics Reduction Act that received Royal Assent on June 5, 2009. OHNIG could give input on the development of regulations to support the Act. The workshop was to solicit the views of technical experts on a range of topics that includes toxic substance accounting, toxic substance reduction plans, and reporting by facilities on toxic substance reduction plans. Invited technical experts included those who are familiar with facility level operations, such as engineers and managers of environment and health and safety consultants. Unfortunately as OHNIG could not send a representative to the first summertime workshop but will schedule an OHNIG member for future Bill 167 Toxic Reduction Regulations workshops.

### COMMUNICATIONS/MEDIA

The Interest Groups of RNAO are important part in achieving the RNAO mission and End goals. As OHNIG chairperson, I attend three Interest Group Chairs meeting a year January, April and September. These provide a forum where OHNIG can share strengths and collaborate on key initiatives with other interest groups.

Ruth Schofield the IG chairperson and BOD representative conducted an IG survey on strengths and weaknesses and where IG could share mutual efforts. OHNIG responded to the survey questions. The survey results hopefully will assist all the Interest Group efforts to be stronger and more effective. The results of the survey will be shared in aggregate and discussed at the next Interest Group Chairs meeting Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

### Member Services

OHNIG initiated a Student Outreach Program for their student members. The program was to prepare written pocket size "quick cue cards" with "need to know health and safety tips" for student nurses entering their first clinical work placement. The first stage over the summertime of the Student Outreach Program was developing the written information. The second stage mid September will be to pilot the health and safety "quick tip cue cards" for input from pilot student groups. The third stage late Fall will be an introductory letter to the university school administration and various student groups with an example and how to obtain the health and safety quick cue cards. OHNIG hopes this will prove useful to nursing students and the "quick cue cards" are intended to be a permanent item to carry forward into their working career as nurses.

OHNIG regular nurse members were asked to consider sponsoring a nurse student clinical placement in their place of work though the student nurses internship placement program. OHNIG would be glad to coordinate in placement opportunities. [info@ohnig.com](mailto:info@ohnig.com)

## **OHNIG Student Outreach Program – Direct Involvement with Students**

**OHNIG Student Outreach program** were pleased when Barb Davies a soon to graduate 4<sup>th</sup> year nursing student wrote for our OHNIG E Newsletter. Her work placement in an occupational health work setting was instrumental in her decision to focus her career on Occupational Health Nursing.

*“I became interested in Occupational Health nursing during a second year clinical placement. After meeting the occupational health nurse, I looked into this occupation and quickly learned that occupational health nurses work with the employee and the employer to maintain, promote, and restore health and safety in the workplace. This research led me to become a member of the RNAO’s occupational health interest group [OHNIG] and the Ontario Occupational Health Nurses Association [OOHNA]. All aspects of Occupational Health Nursing provide a healthy workplace that allows for increased productivity, decreased absenteeism, and reduces the cost for the employer. The more I have learned about Occupational Health nursing, the more I know this is the field for me”.*

OHNIG Student Outreach program approached a second nursing student who was currently doing her student placement in an occupational health and safety consulting company. Breigh Ann Fairburn, now graduated wrote; “I believe that workplace health and safety preparation for student nurses is vitally needed prior to entering the workplace”.

Breigh Ann Fairburn, RN, BScN kindly wrote an “*open letter to her fellow nursing students*” that expressed the many potential risks, the control factors, why it was important to have previous knowledge of health and safety laws and regulation and how to work safely. OHNIG will use her cover letter to invite nursing students to obtain the OHNIG pocket “quick cue cards on health and safety.

### **OTHER**

OHNIG executive members participated in reviewing and commenting on the RNAO “*new*” development for a “Healthy Work Environments Pocket Guide Resource for Nurse Managers”. This “*new*” background resource pocket guide was developed directly from the Healthy Work Environment Best Practice Guidelines HWE BPG information. RNAO encourages all nurse managers to refer to the HWE BPGs for more complete and detailed information.