BCNurses’ Union believes that:

An appropriate staff mix in our public healthcare system is paramount to ensure safe care and that the principle used in deciding the staff mix of the care team must be the level of care required by the patient, client or resident. British Columbians have the right to care provided by those whose education, skill and knowledge meets their care needs.

> Given our commitment to maintaining a quality public healthcare system, BCNU will work with others to create an environment which enables the safe and effective integration of nurses into new areas of practice.

> BCNU believes that RNs must continue to be part of the nursing team that provides direct care, based on evidence gathered through decades of research that links a strong RN presence to improved patient, client and resident outcomes.

> Like RNs, LPNs are independent licensed professionals, responsible for their own practice. At the same time, just as they support other RNs when care needs require it, RNs have a professional responsibility to support LPNs in the delivery of care. This is a professional standard which applies to all licensed nurses – LPN, RN, RPN, NP – that they support others in the provision of care. However, when professional responsibilities are unclear, it is managers in the healthcare system who must provide clarification, direction and resources.

> When staff mix changes are being contemplated, BCNU will engage with the employer to promote our position that the knowledge, skills and abilities of the care provider must match the needs of the patients, clients or residents. In order to systematically ensure this match, BCNU will enter into dialogue with the employer to utilize a workload management/patient classification tool.

> When staff mix changes occur, RNs as well as LPNs must be utilized to their full scope of practice and given the time and resources necessary to meet professional standards.

PRINCIPLES FOR STAFF MIX CHANGE PROCESS

Proposed changes in staff mix or care delivery models must not occur without consultation and dialogue with direct care providers and their respective unions. This consultation and dialogue should occur at the point of contemplation, not once the process is well underway.

The employer is responsible for ensuring that their employees have the licensure and/or certification required for the work they are asking them to perform and must inform the healthcare team what roles and functions members are qualified to perform. Clear job descriptions should be in place.

The work that the care team is going to perform must be clearly delineated by
the employer and any scope of practice concerns must be satisfactorily addressed before a change is initiated so that everyone understands exactly what each team member will do.

When an employer increases the scope of practice of LPNs or other care providers, the change must be implemented in a manner that does not increase the workload of RNs or LPNs or threaten licensure. If workload is increased or patient safety concerns arise, Professional Responsibility Forms and/or grievances will be filed.

Staffing levels must be sufficient to allow for education regarding staff mix/care model changes and on-going opportunities for team communication and problem-solving.

Any change in staff mix or care delivery model should be fully evaluated regarding the impact on both care provider and recipient outcomes.

REGULATORY LEGISLATION

The Health Professions Act (HPA), umbrella legislation for more than 22 healthcare professions, came into effect in 1996. It was enacted after a Health Professions Council was appointed to carry out a legislative review of 10 healthcare professions in BC, including Registered Nurses. The Council deliberated what these 10 healthcare professionals could safely perform in order to protect the public. RNs and Nurse Practitioners became regulated under the HPA in 2005. Prior to that time RNs were covered by the Nurses (Registered) Act.

The HPA gives authority to regulatory bodies such as the College of Registered Nurses of BC (CRNBC) and the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of BC (CLPNBC) to set standards, limits and conditions on the practice of their registrants. Each profession covered by the HPA has an accompanying regulation...
The employer is responsible for ensuring that their employees have the licensure and/or certification required for the work they are asking them to perform and must inform the healthcare team what roles and functions members are qualified to perform. Clear job descriptions should be in place.

These issues of regulation and competencies account for some of the confusion regarding what functions LPNs can carry out independently, as many employers are encouraging the expanded use of LPNs while the regulation still says that LPNs may only carry out nursing services “under the direction of a medical practitioner who is attending the patient or under the supervision of a Registered Nurse who is providing services to the patient.” Once the competencies, scope of practice and regulation has been updated and implemented, role clarity should improve.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact your BCNU Regional Chair to discuss these issues. Go to www.bcnu.org or look in your Update magazine for a list or representatives.