



Open Letter

to nurses in the Winnipeg Health Region

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The individual decisions we make and the actions we take, as nurses, have an important impact on the health of our system. This may not be as obvious as the impact these decisions and actions have on the health and wellbeing of individuals and their families.

The health system has limited capacity, so we need to ensure that everyone moves through that system as safely and efficiently as possible. Sometimes this is referred to as creating a "sense of pull" in the system. This pull means focusing on bringing people to the right place for care as quickly as possible. It is important to think about the needs of the next person, not just the people currently in our care.

The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Board of Directors recently approved a plan to improve the flow of patients through our hospitals, a move designed to enhance how care is delivered throughout the health system. The goal? To use resources the way they're meant to be used, and reduce wait times in emergency. ([Click here](#) and [here](#) to read more.)

What does that mean? It means patients access the right care at the right time in the right place. It means helping the general public understand what resources are available to them in accessing health care services. It also means helping people understand that when they truly have a health care emergency, the system is there to care for them.

The issues are complex. The ideal scenario is that every Manitoban has a primary care provider. The truth is that even if a person does have a primary care provider,

sometimes they aren't able to access same-day services when illness or injury happen. That means they seek other health care resources to be able to help improve their health. For many, that means accessing emergency departments to have their concerns immediately addressed.

Improving patient flow isn't "an emergency department issue". Education and communication are key to improving patient flow – and nurses can play a key role in helping people better understand the right place to access the right services at the right time (To read more, [click here](#)).

Each individual working in health care has a role to play in improving patient flow. To achieve these goals, we need to collaborate within our own teams and within the health care system. Strong team work, focused discharge goals and timelines are essential. The six competencies – person centred care, role clarification, team functioning, collaborative leadership, interprofessional communication and interprofessional conflict resolution – are not only integral to Collaborative Care, they are competencies that will help us meet the patient flow targets as a Region.

OPEN LETTER GOING ONLINE

This is the last print issue of the Open Letter. The next issue, due out in the fall, will be exclusively online. Watch your email on Wednesdays for Health Care Connection or visit and bookmark wrha.mb.ca/nursing to access it.

“We don’t work in isolation. That’s one of the roles of the nurse facilitating the plan of care for this patient – and working with others. Together, we need to work together to do the right thing for the patient.” - Mary Anne Lynch, Program Director for WRHA Medicine Program

You’ll find many tools and resources to help support collaboration at www.wrha.mb.ca/collaborate.

What do the patient flow targets mean for nurses? It means asking questions and finding answers. It may mean a shift in perception or a change in how things are done.



“Help educate patients about how to access the health care system and what alternative ways to access service might be. The emergency department is always there for people, should they need it but there are other parts of the system where they could get the right care without a long wait or using services best designed for true emergencies.”

- Karen Dunlop, Regional Director of WRHA Emergency

Every nurse needs to think about how they can impact those patient flow targets with their nursing practice. Ask yourself: what is it in my practice or work setting that I could do differently that would have an impact?

The answers you come up with may surprise you. Often the simplest solutions can have the greatest impact.

My hope is to inspire you to consider the ways you can help contribute to the Region’s goals. It takes creativity and innovation to look at what you’re doing and how it could be done better.

It takes courage to voice your opinion about how to improve things. I encourage you to do both. Every nurse

that ultimately looks at how their practice can be improved helps meet the overall goals to improve patient flow. If everyone in the health care system examines how improvements can be made to service delivery or processes, the system will improve and so will patient flow.

From acute care and thinking about who the patient is admitted to the unit to looking at how patients are in the right place at the right time in a personal care home setting to helping people access necessary community health resources, each nurse has a role to play. We can all make a difference and help our health care system move more efficiently.

One of the biggest roles nurses can play is educating people – formally or informally – in health and wellness. The simple messages about how to care for our bodies and our health – like having self care practices, eating nutritious and nourishing food, getting enough sleep and exercising – can have a powerful impact on an individual’s wellbeing. Explaining why washing your hands is important, how to properly cough into your sleeve to prevent spreading illness or staying home when you are sick... these are messages nurses can reinforce in their various roles and capacities.

We often forget the impact nurses can have in their communities, too. As health professionals, we are often asked our opinion on health and wellness. Even in informal situations, nurses can help people better understand how to access health care services and empower people with information about how to create and maintain health.



“We need to support nurses to work to full scope of practice. That means encouraging nurses – by providing the time and support – to make sure their clients are aware of the information around their health. But also how to translate information into action that’s going to make a difference for their health.”

- Eliette Alec, Regional Director of Home Care

Save a life, clean your hands

Hospital associated infections are now the fourth leading cause of death for Canadians (after cancer, heart disease and stroke). About 8,000 patients die every year from these infections. To put that into context, that represents the same number of deaths from breast cancer and motor vehicle accidents. You can save a life in 15 seconds just by cleaning your hands.

THERE'S MORE!

You'll find resources to inspire you and an extended version of the Open Letter online at wrha.mb.ca/nursing.



As we make changes and challenge the current health care system to be more innovative and efficient, you can play an integral role in helping make sure patients understand the changes that are being made, why and what the intended impact of those changes is.

National Nursing Week (May 6 – 12, 2013) offers us the opportunity to celebrate the commitment, talent, knowledge and innovation of nurses in health care delivery. This year's Canadian Nurses Association theme – nursing: a leading force for change – encourages reflection on how you can be a catalyst for making the health care system as good as it possibly can be.

Within the Winnipeg Health Region, the timing is right for nurses to be instrumental in offering solutions to improve health and wellness, and to improve patient flow. Through leadership, the opportunity to influence and the knowledge nurses possess and contribute to collaborating with other health care providers, together we can create positive change and improve health both within the system and community.

Nursing offers continual challenges – and rewards. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for seizing opportunities to use your skills, leadership, knowledge and influence. You truly make a difference each and every day.



"As primary care renewal moves forward, it challenges nursing to reflect on how they are working – Are we working to our full scope of practice in relation to the populations that we are serving? What additional skills or knowledge do we need to develop to meet the needs of our clients? Are we

taking a leadership role in interprofessional practice and developing high functioning health care teams? All of these can help increase the capacity of the team to provide efficient, accessible, high quality care to clients."

- Margaret Kozlowski, WRHA Director of Family Medicine-Primary Care Community



"The surprise element is the challenge. If people don't think they're going home, it can sometimes create fallout. Nurses can play a key role in helping people be well-informed about their health status and how that progresses."

- Laurie Walus, CNO of Concordia Hospital

Celebration and reflection often go hand in hand. To encourage you to think about your role as a nurse, I invite you to visit www.wrha.mb.ca/nursing and watch the video we've created to celebrate nurses.

I welcome your reflections on nursing and how nurses can help improve patient flow. Email me your thoughts at wrha_nursing@wrha.mb.ca.

"Long term care nurses are key stakeholders and are instrumental in improving rapid movement of paneled residents by managing their care and plan for discharge to ensure a smooth transition to personal care home (PCH). Nurses are important sources of care information for the PCH's, ACCESS centre and other stakeholders."

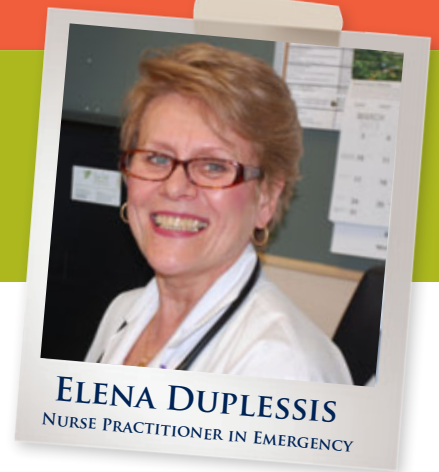
- Linda Norton, Acting Director with the WRHA

What you need to know about privacy settings

Why is it important to understand your friend lists, remove yourself from search results, and protect your photo albums? Boundaries...between your personal and professional life. Visit wrha.mb.ca/nursing for the top 10 privacy settings every Facebook user should know.

in the Spotlight

CELEBRATING one of your nursing PEERS



ELENA DUPLESSIS
NURSE PRACTITIONER IN EMERGENCY

Elena has been nursing for 22 years, much of which she spent as a medical nurse on a medical/surgical unit. She took an intensive care unit (ICU) course and then an emergency course and spent a few years both educating in and managing the ICU. She finished her Master's and became a nurse practitioner (NP) and has worked in emergency in the Minor Treatment Area at Seven Oaks General Hospital (SOGH) since 2006.

What's a typical day like?

I spend 80 per cent of my time in clinic and 20 per cent on program development, research, education and professional development. In clinic, I am responsible for assessing, ordering and interpreting diagnostic tests, diagnosing, treating and then prescribing treatment and/or medication for the patient. I see people for things like sore throats, sprained ankles, broken bones, lacerations, the flu and pneumonia.

What gets you out of bed in the morning?

The pursuit of excellence in my personal life and my career. I have a nice husband and a good family life. I like the place I work and I'm happy with my professional level.

What has influenced your nursing practice?

My philosophy about life and caring has impacted the way I practice nursing. My quest for acquiring academic knowledge and skills and mentors in my life that left lasting impression on my career have also played very strong roles in how I do my work.

"As an NP, I have brought the caring to a different level... providing independent and autonomous medical care with the twist of holistic nursing knowledge and skills."

- Elena Duplessis,
Nurse Practitioner in Emergency

How can nurses contribute to meeting patient flow targets?

Every level of health care provider can help with the much-needed massive education of the public around the role and scope of the emergency department. People need to know when to see their physician, and when to go to a walk-in or quick care clinic.

Visit wrha.mb.ca/nursing to read the longer version of Elena's profile and meet another one of your nursing colleagues working in minor treatment in emergency... Tammy Hagyard-Wiebe.

EVENTS

May 29, 2013
First Line Manager's Day

May/June 2013
Wound Care Education

Fall 2013
Nurturing the Resiliency of the Human Spirit

Visit the Nursing Calendar at
www.wrha.mb.ca/nursing
for more details.

