



Message from the Chair - Leigh Baetz-Craft RN



MCNIG Winter Newsletter 2020

Technically it is still winter, however, spring does feel just around the corner. We have had some big changes in our MCNIG Executive and I know Susan Georgoussis, our new Chair, will be to provide some fresh and invigorating ideas.

This year, the RNAO AGM will be held from June 11 – 13th at the Toronto Hilton and the MCNIG AGM will take place on the morning of Saturday June 13th 2020, also at the Toronto Hilton. We are just lining up a guest speaker at present and want to advertise that this is a free breakfast to all members who wish to attend, but you must register for this opportunity on the RNAO Website.

Here is the link:

<https://rnao.ca/events/annual-general-meeting-agm-opening-ceremonies-and-stakeholder-reception-2>

Last year, we were fortunate to welcome Shezeen Suleman, one of the MATCH Midwives, who spoke about this innovative program of which she is part with 3 other midwives. This year, we promise something as equally interesting and contemporary.

MCNIG will also be able to sponsor two student members to attend the RNAO AGM. The sponsorship includes travel (the least expensive means or parking), shared-room hotel accommodation, lunch on Friday June 12th, banquet tickets and attendance at the MCNIG breakfast meeting. We would like to encourage all students to apply and only ask that they write to us of their interests in any area of that involves MCNIG and write about their experiences for the newsletter following the AGM.

Interested students should apply in writing to info@mcnig.ca . The deadline is April 1 2020.



Queens Park Day – a First Time Perspective

By Susan Georgoussis Chair-Elect

Just hearing the words “Policy and Political Action” used to make my eyes glaze over. Don’t we have more urgent nursing issues to focus on? Actually, no.

After participating in Queens Park Day, I have new appreciation for the importance of a nursing voice in the ear of every politician. How else can we expect well informed policy and funding decisions that protect our valuable healthcare system?

In preparation for the day, the RNAO staff held an upbeat but educational event at the Delta Chelsea Hotel. After a welcoming dinner, there was an informative presentation about what to expect and we reviewed excellent fact sheets on the two priority issues – the opioid epidemic and long-term care crisis.

Armed with facts and figures, the following morning we met with our assigned MPPs, in the Legislative Dining Room for friendly but lively breakfast conversation. The busy day continued with a tour of the Parliament Buildings, photos with the premier and observing the question period. Our afternoon at Hart House provided an opportunity to hear from key representatives of each political party. These sessions provided new insights into the political planning and process for new health initiatives such as the Ontario Health Teams.

You may wonder how this is relevant to our Interest Group, MCNIG? An important example is the overwhelming impact of the opioid crisis on families that many of us have seen firsthand – either personally or professionally, in hospital or the community. Our clients may be an expectant mother on methadone, substance-exposed babies who require hospitalization or adolescents who need access to a safe injection center. The rising death rate from overdose is shocking and related health issues are diverse and complex - nurses know what these issues are but do the politicians?

How do you feel about the decriminalization of opioids? There is strong evidence that opioid use is a health issue not a criminal issue. Whatever your opinion and experience, it is essential to hold discussions with elected decision-makers so they know the nursing perspective as they consider new laws or changes to existing legislation?

Recent changes to education funding and reduced support for children with autism also have a huge impact on health of families in crisis. While teachers and families are speaking up, they need the support of other health care providers, like registered nurses. The knowledge and expertise of nursing is valuable, credible and needs to be shared with decision makers.

Are you comfortable discussing these issues with elected officials? Events like Queens Park Day provide a unique opportunity to build confidence in your ability to make a difference. For me, the experience helped demystify the political process and reminded me how important it is that nurses actively influence health care decisions. If we don't, then someone else will!

Thank you to Doris Grinspun and the entire RNAO team who organized this valuable event.



MCNIG Scholarship Winners

As the Chair, I have had the absolute pleasure of attending the Registered Nurses' Foundation of Ontario (RNFOO) annual awards dinner for the last few years to honour the recipients of the MCNIG Scholarship awards.

Some of you may know that MNCIG has 3 scholarships available to members with two at the Master's level and one at the doctorate level and these are awarded by the RNFOO. I would like to showcase some of our winners over the last couple of years.

Jessica Pimienta 2019



Rebekah Bushby 2018 sorry no picture

Karen Campbell 2016 (and she has won it twice)



Congratulations to this year's winners



Elections

Every year MCNIG looks for student representatives.

The student liaison is an associate of RNAO who provides the student perspective to the executive. They are charged with connecting to the nursing student community, doing outreach and encouraging other students to join and get involved in group activities.

We have a few positions that are up for election this year for RN members only:

Communications Executive Network Officer

The Communications ENO is the hub of communications with the public and the media. As part of the executive team, this person:

- edits the group newsletter
- writes media releases and opinion pieces (with the support of home office)
- monitors media and raises the profile and prestige of nurses
- takes photos, shoots videos and documents group events

Membership Executive Network Officer

The Membership ENO is the person on the executive team concerned with recruiting and retaining members to the group. To this end they are engaged in:

- recruitment efforts for potential members; i.e. events, displays, email or regular mailings
- engaging and encouraging existing members to get involved (home office can assist in coordinating email communications to members)
- recognizing great members by submitting nominations for RNAO Recognition Awards, together with the rest of the executive team.

Chair Elect with role description of the Chair below:

The central person in the executive acts as a crucial point of contact for home office and brings together the work of the whole team. Key responsibilities include: • organize and chair executive meetings • produce Members' Voices reports to share the work of the group • represent the group at RNAO meetings (assembly, AGM, and Queen's Park Day) as well as in the public and the media as needed • recruit, mentor and support other executive members in their roles • ensure dissemination of information from RNAO to executive and chapter/region without chapters/interest group members • manage funds along with the finance executive network officer (ENO)

If you are interested in any of these positions or need more information about them and joining the MCNIG executive, please email info@mcnig.ca

Thank you to Erika Fifield, our Political Action and Policy ENO for submitting the following essay she wrote as a student.

Pregnancy Support for University Students – MCNIG Newsletter, Winter 2020

Written by Erika Fifield, 2019

The life of a university student encompasses a variety of responsibilities: balancing placement and internship schedules, juggling assignment workloads, working to make money for necessities, and trying to maintain a vibrant social life – to name a few. Imagine adding parenthood and family responsibilities to the table... or finding out you or your partner are pregnant, and it was not part of the plan. Evidently, carrying a pregnancy while enrolled in a university or college program can pose significant challenges. Thus, it is common for women to feel as though they must choose between pursuing parenthood or their career, for it is not often accepted or even desirable by our social structure to embrace both at the same time.

This view may explain why childbearing age has increased over the past several decades. According to Statistics Canada, “since 2005, the fertility rate for women aged 30-34 has surpassed that of women aged 25-29”.¹ Something to consider, however, is that a woman’s fertility begins to fall significantly in her early to mid thirties² - a factor that may challenge the decision to become pregnant *after* one’s career and education goals have been met. This view may also help to explain why women in their 20’s – “the age when they are attending school [and] starting their careers” – experience the highest rates of abortion.³

What if we held a different perspective? What if women were *also* told that they have the support and environment they need to be successful in pursuing their educational and career goals while carrying a pregnancy? What if educational environments – similar to many work environments – were supportive of pregnant students and accommodating to their unique lifestyle and needs? Without further ado, allow me to introduce to you an initiative striving to promote this very perspective: the Ryerson Pregnancy Care (RPC) group.

Beginning in the fall of 2017, I led a team of Ryerson students comprised of nursing and social work students, who collaborated to initiate Ryerson's first ever pregnancy support group on campus. As a fourth-year nursing student at Ryerson who was (and still is!) passionate about maternal-child care, I had asked myself whether support like this was available for pregnant students on campus. A simple google search at the time would have revealed the significant gap of services for pregnant students on the Ryerson campus. At the time I had also been volunteering for about two years with Toronto's Pregnancy Care Centre (PCC) – a Christian non-profit, non-political, charitable organization whose vision is “a city where no woman faces an unexpected pregnancy alone; where every mother and father have access to care, support, and community; and where parents and their unborn children are treasured by all”.⁴ With an identified need for on-campus pregnancy support and a connection to an organization who had the experience, resources and a similar mission, I decided to start the RPC group.

To become an official group on campus, we obtained approval from the Ryerson Student Union (RSU) and took on status as an affiliate group. Becoming an affiliate group meant that we could partner with the PCC and access their resources when providing our services, as well as gain a reputable image in accordance to the RSU's mission and policy standards. We were given funding and resources by the PCC to design and print posters, design a website page, host tabling events, and have access to a designated representative who assisted us in training our volunteers and provided advice when needed.

RPC is a student organization that exists to create an educational environment that is accepting and supportive of all pregnant students.⁵ Our mission is to provide resources and support to help anyone continue with their education during their pregnancy.⁵ The group has no formal religious or political affiliation and provides care to all pregnant students regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or political views.⁵ Services we provide include:

offering confidential emotional support, help creating a parenting plan while continuing with education, free pregnancy tests, confidential support and mentoring, educational meetings, providing connections to community resources and services, club promotion throughout campus, and promoting and creating an affirming environment throughout Ryerson for pregnant students who want to continue their education and their pregnancy.⁵

Within the first year, we learned how to market ourselves as a group that adapted to the standards of our University community, secured a confidential and safe space on campus to meet with students one on one, spoke with students who were facing unexpected pregnancies, promoted the slogan to “end the stigma” for pregnant students on campus through tabling events and social media, as well as hosted baby shower for one of our student moms. We also started creating a pregnancy care guide for students at Ryerson so they could have contact information for all the resources they may choose to access to as a pregnant student and learn how to navigate the university system while pregnant.

The group is still currently running out of Ryerson and meeting with pregnant students to support them through their education while being pregnant. In the fall of 2019, another group of students at the University of Toronto began working with the PCC toward the creation of a group that offers similar services. The University of Toronto Pregnancy Care (UTPC) group is currently being reviewed by ULife and pending acceptance as an affiliate group. If you are interested in start something similar at your post-secondary institution, I would highly recommend reaching out to either the PCC or students running the RPC and UTPC groups to seek advice on how to get started.

How to contact RPC?

Text: 416-229-2607

Email: rpc@ryerson.ca

Instagram: @ryersonpc

How to contact PCC or UTPC?

Call or text: 416-229-2607

Email: info@pregnancycentre.org

If you or someone you know is facing an unexpected pregnancy while in school or would like to pursue both their parenting and career goals, the RPC and PCC are there to help! Students can set up an appointment with a student team member and the PCC campus outreach coordinator by texting 647-505-8309 or by emailing rpc@ryerson.ca.

References

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