

# **Family Practice Nurse Round Table Discussion**

## **November 3, 2006**

### **Discussion Highlights**

#### **Goals for the day**

On Friday, November 3, 2006 approximately 40 people gathered together to discuss the role of Family Practice Nurses (FPN's) in Nova Scotia. Nurses from across the province joined Physicians, Primary Health Care Coordinators and representatives from the College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Department of Health to gain a common provincial perspective on the current and future role of the FPN.

Goals for the day included: sharing the 2004/05 Research on the Current Role of Family Practice/Primary Health care (FP/PHC) Nurses in Nova Scotia; exploring networking and educational opportunities; focusing on opportunities for FPN's to become involved in both provincial and regional primary health care planning activities; and to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the FPN role in the context of the opportunities and challenges that exist in the surrounding environment.

#### **Sharing Background Information**

Throughout the day participants learned about a planning session held in February 2004 and the work done since that time. During the February session participants used a brainstorming process to gather ideas about enhancing the role of the FPN in Nova Scotia and then grouped the ideas into themes. The themes were prioritized, establishing the need to focus on 3 key areas: creating a planning structure or process; gathering information and defining the scope of practice for RN's working in community health settings in Nova Scotia; and developing and implementing a communication strategy.

Carol Todd RN and Marilyn Howlett RN presented the results of their research on The Role of FP/PHC Nurses in Nova Scotia, which was completed in 2005. The research was made possible through funding provided by the Department of Health's Nursing Strategy Program. Forty-one nurses from across the province completed the survey and 22 of these nurses participated in an in depth telephone survey. The presentation summarized the key findings of the research including: collaboration; continuity of care; triage; scope of practice; patient education; concerns and challenges. A detailed report can be found on the Family Practice Nurses web site

<http://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/programsandservices/familypracticenurses/index.html>

They completed their presentation by elaborating on the ripple effect of their initiative, some of which included: the launching of FPN web site; hosting a FPN educational day; networking provincially and nationally; and publishing a number of articles.

To date presentations have been given to: the CRNNS Annual General Meeting; the District Counsel of Family Physicians; GASHA; and Family Medicine Residents. Articles have been published in: Doctors Nova Scotia; and the Canadian Family Physician (by Dr. L. Nasmith).

Dr. Brendan Carr and Patsy Smith MN, RN gave a brief summary of their CDHA pilot program “Nursing in Your Family Practice: A Program for Physicians”. Their presentation, which highlighted efforts in the Capital District Health Authority to promote and support a collaborative FPN/Physician fee for service model, generated a great deal of interest. Questions can be directed to the CDHA Primary Care office at (902) 473-5645.

## **Gaining a Provincial Perspective – SWOT Analysis**

### **Internal Strengths and Weaknesses**

During the day structured small group discussion helped establish the internal strengths and weaknesses of the current FPN role. In terms of strengths there was overwhelming agreement that FPN’s add value in areas such as: chronic disease management; continuity of care; holistic approaches to care; assessment and triage services; patient education and health promotion; patient advocacy; and helping patients access community resources.

Although a number of weaknesses were identified, a strong theme developed focusing on the need to better define the role of the FPN. All agreed that this would help to clarify scope and standards of practice, result in name clarification and in the identification of educational/development needs. Participants also felt role clarification would be a key step in generating public awareness and in development of needed communication strategies. Nurses also agreed that FPN’s are experiencing high levels of isolation and this lack of cohesiveness is contributing to a lack of networking opportunities. Another predominant area of concern was the financial challenges faced by this group, particularly inconsistent payment models and the lack of benefits.

### **External Opportunities and Challenges**

Strengths and weaknesses were then examined within the context of the opportunities and challenges that exist in the external environment. All agreed that there is a greater understanding, both amongst health care professionals and the general public, of the need for health promotion and self care. Trends are shifting in support of team based interdisciplinary practice and Family Physicians are more

aware and open to participate in collaborative practice models. Many agreed that they would like to learn more about the funding model being piloted by CDHA and highlighted the need to explore other funding models as well. Another theme focused on the need for networking and the possibility of working with the existing Community Health Nursing interest group.

In terms of threats and/or challenges, discussion focused on growing health care demands, funding limitations and how existing funding models present major limitations. Participants agreed that models need to be examined in the context of developing multidisciplinary health care teams and current MSI billing practices need to be clarified to ensure consistent approaches in billing for FPN services. Work also needs to be done to help ensure standardized billing practices balance volume driven models with a focus on positive health outcomes. All agreed that efforts to generate awareness and support for the FPN role must continue. For these efforts to be successful, lack of a cohesive voice, high degrees of isolation and fragmented efforts must be addressed. Confusion about the FPN and the Nurse Practitioner role also remains a major challenge.

### **Next Steps**

Based on the SWOT discussions each group was then asked to identify 3 key activities or next steps that would help to build on the strengths identified, minimize the weaknesses, leverage external opportunities and mitigate any threats or challenges.

Although one of the 6 groups identified the need to create policy incentives to address funding challenges there was overwhelming consensus among the remaining groups that the next steps should focus on role clarification. Based on these discussions participants agreed that the following steps should be taken to continue their collective efforts to enhance the role of the FPN in Nova Scotia:

- Early in 2007 meet with FPN's who, after attending the recent FPN Educational Day and/or today's FPN Round Table Discussion, volunteered to help lead future efforts.
- With support from the College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia, develop provincial networking opportunities for FPN including options such as an interest group, a professional association, and/or a collaboration network. Explore educational opportunities through Telehealth.
- Also with support from the College focus early efforts on clarifying the role of the FPN's working in Nova Scotia, specifically FPN Competencies.

- Continue efforts to raise awareness about the role of the FPN by scheduling presentation to groups including the Provincial Nursing Network, Physicians, and District Health Authorities.
- Agreed that a summary of the Round Table Discussions and agreed upon next steps will be shared with all participants as well as the list of Round Table Discussion participants.

## **Conclusions**

At the end of the day-long session there was definite agreement that Family Practice Nurses are making a significant contribution to Nova Scotia's health care system. There was strong consensus that role clarification is key to future success and needed to address many of the issues discussed during the day including the need for networking, communication, educational activities, and funding strategies.

Both Carol Todd and Marilyn Howlett were acknowledged for their dedicated efforts in support of FPN's throughout the province.