

## OH&S December 2007 Report Shaughnessy Heights

There are several initiatives that the PHSA is working on to improve the health, wellness and safety of their employees. Some of these programs the BCNU have been a part of. The MHWG (mental health working group) is one committee that I've been involved in and it has been very busy. With a recent pay stub they sent out a brochure on a new program available to staff. That is the "feeling better now" an on-line confidential mental health assessment tool. This tool is for employees who want more information on mental health issues and to help assess themselves and or family members. This assessment is a good starting point to recognizing any illness and in getting help. Self care is an extremely hard sell to nurses who are trained to look after others first. Looking after ourselves is so very important. We won't be in a position to look after our patients and our families if we don't take care of our own mental and physical health first.

We are getting a lot of interesting data from a survey that was done this summer with PHSA employees. The MHWG is waiting for the final report (due in December) to make decisions on which health and wellness areas that the organization wants to focus on. BCNU stewards have been able to give our input into these decisions. I can't stress it too much that surveys do work and that we need to fill them out. Organizations do look at the results and try to implement changes in response to the results. For instance, in the preliminary results it was reported that employees want and need more exercise. So the health and wellness department had set up some exercise classes at C&W, which hours are most beneficial for the office and support workers. I told the group that these classes would not work for the nurses very well and that some other strategy must be used for us. We continue to look at other ways to improve the health and wellness of all PHSA employees.

Violence in the workplace is a huge health and safety issue. BCNU in the past has led campaigns to increase public and staff awareness about the dangers and the misconception that violence against nurses is expected and accepted—which it is not. In our last contract there was new language stating that each health authority must establish joint (employee and management) violence prevention programs. I went to my first meeting with the PHSA group in November. There is lots of work to be done. There has been a couple of PRFs brought forward in regard to this issue from the mental health program at children's hospital. Already some improvements have been made, or at least some steps towards making it a safer workplace for staff has been made. PRFs are a great forum to get our concerns brought forward and to get action from management and ourselves. And in many cases it creates a safe and respectful place for nurses and managers to sit down together to work towards a common goal.

I send season greetings to everyone and wish you all lots of health, happiness and peace in the New Year.

With respect from Diane Hystad