

Guest Editorial

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Nursing the future: A resource for supporting new graduate nurses' transition to practice

Across Canada, newly graduated nurses are entering the workforce during one of the most complex and demanding times in healthcare history. Amid staffing shortages, rising patient acuity, and high workplace expectations, the transition from student to professional nurse can feel overwhelming. Without structured support, new nurses often experience significant stress, self-doubt, and uncertainty in their professional roles. Many leave the profession within the first two years.

Nursing the Future (NTF) was created to address this challenge. Founded in 2001 by professional role transition expert and researcher, Dr. Judy Boychuk Duchscher, NTF is a national initiative that supports early-career nurses as they navigate the realities of entering professional practice. Through a blend of mentorship, leadership development, resource sharing, and peer support, NTF helps new nurses build confidence, develop resilience, and establish a strong sense of professional identity.

Nursing the Future offers a comprehensive suite of resources grounded in the lived experience of new graduates. In addition to education series focused on the needs of new graduates, NTF offers a diverse range of interactive and accessible learning opportunities. These include live learning sessions, a career exploration series, question-and-answer panels, podcasts, interviews, and real-world stories shared directly from the field. Visitors are encouraged to explore the full suite of resources at www.nursingthefuture.ca, where students, new graduates, and educators can find tools that support both individual growth and successful integration into the healthcare workplace.

These resources help new nurses understand the emotional and cognitive transitions that come with stepping into the workforce. Topics, such as managing transition shock, navigating team dynamics, coping with ethical stress, and clarifying role expectations, are all addressed through accessible, evidence-informed content.

A key strength of NTF is its collaborative and responsive design. Programs are developed in consultation with students,

new graduates, and practising clinicians, to ensure they remain relevant and meaningful. This feedback-driven approach allows NTF to remain adaptable and effective in addressing the changing realities of healthcare. Beyond survival in the first year of practice, NTF places a strong emphasis on cultivating leadership and professional growth.

While NTF's central mission is to support early-career nurses, the organization also recognizes the important role of professional and specialty associations in creating opportunities for engagement, education, and advancement. The **Operating Room Nurses Association of Canada (ORNAC)**, for example, plays a key role in perioperative nursing by developing national practice guidelines, offering continuing education, and building a professional community for surgical nurses.

Perioperative settings are uniquely demanding, requiring nurses to master highly technical skills, adapt to complex team structures, and function under significant pressure. New graduates entering the operating room (OR) must integrate, quickly, the knowledge of sterile techniques, surgical protocols, and interprofessional communication. Many operating room leaders have noted that new nurses often enter these environments without adequate preparation or exposure during their undergraduate education.

Nursing the Future's strategies help bridge this gap by preparing new nurses with clinical insight and also with the tools to manage stress, seek mentorship, and actively engage in their own development. For specialties like the OR, where strong communication, situational awareness, and emotional resilience are essential, these supports are especially valuable.

When specialty organizations engage with new nurses early in their careers, everyone benefits. These relationships provide clear career pathways and reduce the barriers that can discourage new graduates from entering complex specialties. By helping new nurses feel supported and capable within demanding practice areas, such as the OR, NTF contributes to a more resilient and sustainable nursing workforce. Alignment between transition-focused initiatives, like NTF, and organizations, such as ORNAC, helps create a profession that is welcoming, inclusive, and better prepared for the future.

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