

Appendix

Preventing Client Abuse



COLLEGE OF NURSES
OF ONTARIO
ORDRE DES INFIRMIÈRES
ET INFIRMIERS DE L'ONTARIO

THE STANDARD OF CARE.

Introduction

As part of its vision of excellence in nursing practice, the College of Nurses of Ontario takes the issue of abuse of clients by nurses or by any other care provider very seriously.

The College's *Therapeutic Nurse-Client Relationship* practice standard, which all Ontario nurses are obliged to follow, gives specific guidelines for what constitutes acceptable or appropriate behaviour in any situation involving a nurse and client. Being aware of what is abusive to clients is the first step in abuse prevention.

What is client abuse?

Client abuse is the misuse of power or the betrayal of trust, respect or intimacy in the therapeutic relationship. Abuse can take many forms:

- physical (e.g., striking a client or causing discomfort);
- oral (e.g., shouting at or insulting a client);
- emotional (e.g., mistreating a family member);
- sexual;
- financial; or
- neglect.

Abuse can be subtle or overt. However, it always interferes with meeting the client's therapeutic needs and can permanently harm the relationship between the client and the nurse.

The College collects information about abuse to become better able to help nurses recognize and stop abuse. A recent survey of 1,027 Ontario nurses found that 42 percent had witnessed at least one incident of client abuse in the past three years, and another nine percent had heard of one. The most common forms of abuse are embarrassing or offensive comments, ignoring care needs, and yelling and swearing. Nurses report client abuse in all

practice settings: hospitals, the community, and in psychiatric and long-term care facilities.

Here are some other findings from the College's survey about client abuse:

- 61 percent of reported victims were women;
- 67 percent of victims were 65 or older;
- 64 percent of victims knew their abusers fairly well;
- 73 percent of victims were stressed;
- 52 percent of victims were medicated and/or confused; and
- 30 percent of nurses had witnessed or heard of four or more incidents of abuse.

A program to prevent or stop abuse

The College has a comprehensive educational program, titled *One is One Too Many*, aimed at increasing nurses' knowledge of client abuse and what to do about it. The program focuses on helping nurses to recognize warning signs and informs them of their obligation to speak out about abuse by others. The program also refers to abuse against nurses, an increasingly serious problem in today's health care system.

The program was originally developed in 1994 to respond to a government requirement that all health colleges provide member education about abuse. It was revised in 1999 and again in 2005.

One is One Too Many includes three components: a video/DVD, a workshop facilitator's guide and a workbook for nurses. The video is a docudrama that uses actual nurses and clients, as well as actors, to illustrate cases of abuse. It contains several powerful scenarios and provides valuable commentary from nurses on their own experiences and best practices.

The program's theme is: speak out to stop abuse. The theme emerged from research that showed that

when a nurse intervenes in an incident of client abuse, the abuse stops. The objective of the theme, and of the program overall, is to empower nurses to get involved to protect their clients, their colleagues and themselves.

For more information about CNO's abuse prevention program or to purchase a copy of the *One is One Too Many* video or other learning resources, see below.

For more information

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