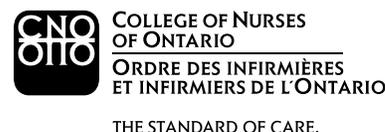


New RN exam: Let's get back to the facts



Ontario's nursing graduates are passing the regulator's new entry-to-practice exam and becoming nurses. It's time to stop the inaccurate information about the exam and support nursing graduates in becoming safe nurses

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 11, 2016 (Toronto) — In 2015, 84% of graduates of a registered nursing (RN) educational program in Ontario passed the new exam needed to begin working as a nurse.

Yet, despite these very good results, which are close to pass rates on the previous exam, unsubstantiated rumours and inaccurate information continue to be spread by others in the health care community. This is causing unnecessary confusion and fear for graduates and the public.

“The 2015 exam data tells us the new exam, known as the NCLEX-RN, is very successful,” says Anne Coghlan, Executive Director and CEO of the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO). “It’s unfortunate that this data is being misinterpreted and incorrectly linked to other health care issues, such as hospital budgeting issues.”

As the regulator, CNO is accountable for choosing and monitoring the exam, and is the source for information on its results. Each year, CNO publishes a comprehensive report of exam pass rates for Ontario nursing graduates. The 2015 data, to be released at the end of March, will show how many writers passed on their first, second or third attempt at the exam (in Ontario, applicants have three attempts at the exam).

While Ontario’s nursing educators provide the learning needed to prepare someone for a career in nursing, CNO regulates Ontario nurses on behalf of the public. Other nursing organizations promote the specific interests of the nursing profession, such as those of educators and unions.

“The regulator’s role is to protect the public by ensuring applicants are ready to practise safely,” explains Coghlan. “The exam is a safety check we make on behalf of the public.”

“Ultimately, 84% of those who wrote the exam in 2015 did pass. Of those who had not yet been successful by the end of the year, many still had attempts remaining,” says Nancy Sears, President of the council that governs CNO. “The council is confident in the use of this exam. It is one of our means of guarding public safety.”

continued

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What is the regulator's exam?

In Ontario, nursing graduates must pass a national exam approved by the province's nursing regulator, the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO). It's one of several requirements that ensure graduates have basic knowledge, skill and judgment to provide safe care.

Some of the areas the exam tests for include the graduate's ability to:

- assess and respond to changes in vital signs
- perform comprehensive health assessments
- assess a client's need for pain management
- perform calculations needed to safely administer medications
- maintain client confidentiality and privacy.

The NCLEX-RN uses an approach to exam writing that is new to most Ontario graduates. While there was a 10-15% drop in the pass rate on the first attempt of the new exam in 2015, the pass rate on the second attempt was 10-15% higher than previous years. As writers gain confidence and become familiar with the exam's new format, CNO expects to see more writers passing on their first attempt.

In meetings with Ontario nurse educators, CNO learned that many are focused on helping their students understand the new exam, both its format and its content, and have confidence that their graduates are being provided the education needed to pass the exam.

"As the regulator, it's vital for public safety that we continue to retain the integrity and security of the exam we use," says council President Sears. "We won't let the public down."

The 2015 report on the regulator's exams will be released on March 31, 2016 on www.cno.org.

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About the College of Nurses of Ontario

The College of Nurses of Ontario is the regulatory body for the province's 160,000 Registered Nurses, Registered Practical Nurses and Nurse Practitioners. Its mission is to regulate nursing in the public interest.

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