

Putting a Stop to Nurse Impostors



THE STANDARD OF CARE.

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Recently, the College of Nurses of Ontario has played a key role in the prosecution of several nurse impostors in the Ontario courts. Nurse impostors (or “illegal practitioners”) claim to be nurses although they do not have the proper qualifications.

In October, Jacqueline Leslie-Johnston was sentenced in Ontario court to 24-months probation and an \$8,000 fine after committing fraud by presenting forged documents to gain employment. This case follows the prosecution of Eva Donna Akinyi Okello, a repeat offender, who was convicted of identity theft and sentenced to eight months in jail in September, and Steven Roppel, who was fined \$40,000 and put on probation in July.

“Action must be taken to protect the public when unqualified people use deceit and fraud to gain nursing employment,” says Karen McGovern, the College’s Director of Professional Conduct. “The penalties in these cases show that the courts share our view that impostor nurses put the public at serious risk.”

These impostors could have been stopped had their employers learned they were not nurses before hiring them. Confirming whether someone is a nurse is easy. Information about every nurse in Ontario is available on Find a Nurse, a searchable database on the College’s website. Only people registered with the College can call themselves nurses.

Leslie-Johnston’s fraud was revealed when a potential employer checked Find a Nurse. Although never registered with the College, Leslie-Johnston was employed as a nurse by two agencies – one for almost six years—after convincing them she was qualified by producing forged College registration documents.

To reduce opportunities for fraud, the College has stopped giving nurses a paper card indicating they paid their annual membership fee; this information is now available only on Find a Nurse. The College also has a list of impostors on its website at www.cno.org/illegal-practitioners.

“Taking a few minutes to confirm a job applicant’s registration with the College is better than dealing with the repercussions of a patient being harmed by an unqualified person,” says McGovern.

A person’s registration status can be checked on Find a Nurse, the College’s online register of its members, or by calling Customer Service at 416 928-0900, or toll-free at 1 800 387-5526. Learn more about what nurses do in *Here For You*, the College’s online public newsletter.

Media calls should be directed to: Deborah Jones,
Manager, Communications
E-mail: dmjones@cnomail.org
416 928-0900 or toll-free in Ontario: 1 800 387-5526, ext. 7609

College of Nurses of Ontario
101 Davenport Rd., Toronto, ON
M5R 3P1 www.cno.org

Tel.: 416 928-0900
Toll-free in Ontario: 1 800 387-5526
Fax: 416 928-6507

Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers de l'Ontario
101 chemin Davenport (Toronto) Ontario
M5R 3P1 www.cno.org

Téléphone 416 928-0900
Sans frais (Ontario) 1 800 387-5526
Télécopieur 416 928-6507