

UROLOGY NURSES of CANADA: A WORK IN EVOLUTION

What do you know about the UNC and their organization? Have you ever wondered who they are and how they interact with the Journal? This question was posed by Mikel Gray, in his guest commentary for the Urologic Nursing Journal, March 1995. In his commentary, he identified the Journal as the official journal for both the [Society of Urologic Nurses and Associates \(SUNA\)](#) and the Urology Nurses of Canada (UNC).

In fact, the UNC is a National Association whose mandate is to enhance the specialty of urologic nursing in Canada by promoting education, research, and clinical practice. The activities of the Urology Nurses of Canada are designed to enrich members' professional growth and development. You might be interested to know that in many ways the UNC is very similar to SUNA, sharing common goals and objectives, yet encountering varying issues which really require different approaches for resolution. Differences in health care systems, shifting financial resources, a larger geographical region with a significantly smaller population, are but some of the contributing factors to our differences.

From an historical perspective, the UNC founding fathers originated in Toronto, Ontario and date back to 1985 where discussions began to plan a urology conference. The first "UNC" urology conference in 1987 boasted 250 delegates representing mostly the province of Ontario. This group emerged as the Urology Nurses Interest Group (UNIG). The intent to form a national urology association was always prevalent. In 1990, our envisioned leaders facilitated the link from a regional to a national perspective which led to the Urology Nurses of Canada. The initial focus of the UNC was to provide an annual urology conference at various locations across Canada, thereby providing the opportunity of networking and creating links with those interested in urologic nursing. This September, the UNC will celebrate the 10th Annual "Urological Excellence Conference" in Edmonton, Alberta.

In 1995, the UNC established a Constitution with clearly delineated national objectives which include the development of national Standards of Practice in Urology. The UNC publishes a communiqué, the "[Pipeline](#)" bi-annually. This communiqué serves to enhance communication about current issues, research, educational events, resources available e.g. web sites, videos, to patients, community and health care professionals, and information on advancing technology. The UNC recently acquired affiliate status with our physician colleagues, the [Canadian Urological Association \(CUA\)](#). Membership in the UNC is comprised of nurses from most provinces and represents a very small portion of the some 200,000 Registered Nurses across Canada. The UNC is organized at a national, regional and local level. The UNC is not self-financed and greatly benefits from corporate sponsorships to see initiatives to fruition.

The UNC is "a work in evolution". The UNC has the challenges of being a small specialty in nursing, with several sub-specialties, challenged to thrive in an environment faced with restructuring, reengineering and rightsizing. The economic realities combined with geographical barriers, potentiate "specialty isolation". Nurses who once perceived themselves as "urology nurses" are threatened by layoffs, nurse replacements, and relocation. Promoting and maintaining membership in a small specialty such as the UNC has its challenges.

Enhancing communication, collaborating with colleagues, creating opportunity to promote education, evidence-based urologic nursing practice, and establishing standards are crucial in today's rapidly changing environment. Never before has the need been greater! The UNC is extremely fortunate to have an enthusiastic, dynamic executive board with expertise in clinical practice, research and education who offer their time voluntarily and who are truly committed to the growth and viability of Urologic Nursing in Canada. While the UNC continues to evolve, we must not lose sight of the expertise available not only within Canada, but externally. After all, we are all walking on the same road....it all depends on what side of the road you walk.....not to mention the challenges of construction along the way!

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