



Resolution Statement

Key resources to ensure the ongoing provision of health services in French

Approved by: 2017 National Assembly, Canadian Nursing Students' Association

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Submitted to: Board of Directors

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Issue

Canadian residents are privileged to live in a country with two official languages, namely French and English. This linguistic duality has resulted in the country becoming home to a diverse and inclusive population. According to the data obtained through Statistics Canada's 2011 census, nearly 7 million people claim to speak French at home (Statistics Canada, 2015). There are currently only seven universities in Canada (not counting Québec) which offer a nursing program with courses in French. Considering that the country boasts such a larger number of French-speaking people (7 million), this number is very low! According to a special report from the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner of Ontario, "Linguistic and cultural barriers have many negative effects on the quality of the services and the efficacy and efficiency of the health system... Linguistic and cultural barriers also reduce the probability of compliance with treatment and users' satisfaction with the care and services they receive." (page 7) For the wellbeing of Canada's Francophone patients, it is critical that our country's health system be able to offer quality healthcare services in French. Patients are not the only ones impacted; it has been found that the lack of French language services also touches the health system as a whole, its professionals and its varied establishments.

Immediately following the January 2015 introduction of the new NCLEX-RN entry-to-practice exam, Francophone students enrolled in the country's nursing programs expressed their dismay with the new tool, specifically citing the lack of preparatory material in French. The students' fears were founded, as illustrated when the 2015 results were published by the Canadian Council of Registered Nurse Regulators (CCRNR): the average pass rate for Canadian students taking the exam for the first time was **69.7%**, a rate that dropped to 27.1% in the case of Francophone students, thereby constituting an unacceptable and unjustifiable variance. Based on numerous interviews of recent graduates, a research team led by Linda McGillis-Hall concluded that the very low passing rate among students who took the NCLEX-RN exam in French was due to **the poor quality of the exam's translation into French** as well as a **blatant lack of preparatory material** (Hall, Lalonde and Kashin, 2016).



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At this time, nursing students enrolled in French-language programs must either rely on resources that were not specifically developed for the NCLEX-RN exam or attempt to study using some of the numerous English resources available. To date, these students have mostly opted to turn to preparatory material in English. Studying in this manner, in a language that is neither their mother tongue nor the language of their nursing program, creates a great deal of confusion, exasperation, anxiety and stress among the students in question; it also requires a significantly greater effort (Radio-Canada, 2016).

CNSA's position

In its strategic plan, the CNSA first claimed to want to ensure that "...accessible and relevant information and services are provided to our members." (CNSA, 2016) This will require that the organization improve access to adequate preparatory material by its Francophone members, as this group needs effective tools to complete their nursing studies and begin to practise. The CNSA then identified a second objective, namely to "...Influence and advance innovation and social justice in the nursing curriculum and the nursing profession" (CNSA, 2016). In this specific case, the lack of preparatory material in French reflects a violation of Francophone students' ability to access resources in their mother tongue, which happens to be one of Canada's two official languages. This motion is specifically aligned with the strategic plan's third objective, which concerns the development and strengthening of partnerships with CNSA stakeholders. The organization hopes to achieve this by collaborating with Francophone university programs, the CNFS (Consortium national de formation en santé) and provincial nursing orders that have been calling for additional resources in French since the NCLEX's roll-out in 2013.

Study programs at Canada's schools of nursing

As noted by Hall, Lalonde and Kashin (2016), a failure to act quickly will likely result in highly detrimental long-term impacts on the Francophone identity and culture in the health sector. It is almost certain that some students avoid following a French-language nursing program, given that many of the resources required to successfully pass the entry-to-practice exam are not available in that language. In a Radio-Canada broadcast that aired in 2016, a nursing school student insisted that she would never have entered a French-language program had she known that she would have to subsequently relearn all of the material - in English - to be able to pass the exam. There is thus a real risk that Francophones in the health sector will lose their linguistic identity (that of the often-forgotten minority in Canada) if they decide to practise solely in English.

At this time, there are no preparatory resources for the NCLEX-RN exam in French. To address and find a solution to this crucial matter, Laurentian University, University of Ottawa, Université de Moncton and Université de St-Boniface are all cooperating with the CNFS to develop preparatory modules for their students. According to the dean of the Laurentian University School of Nursing, there are at this time four modules completed (and available to students) and four more in the process of being prepared. The four finalized modules are the only resources available to help these students prepare for the newly introduced evaluation mechanism. These



universities, moreover, were never informed that they would be responsible for developing their own preparatory material for the NCLEX exam (Hall, Lalonde and Kashin, 2016).

Rationale

Whereas the CNSA's objective is to serve as the primary resource for nursing students;

Whereas the CNSA, as regards the national entry-to-practice exam, seeks to defend the interests of its Francophone members from outside Québec;

Whereas the main outcome of objective A of the CNSA's Strategic Plan 2016-2021 consists of ensuring that members can readily access relevant information and services;

Whereas no resources have been developed to enable Francophone students enrolled in nursing programs to prepare for the entry-to-practice NCLEX exam in French.

Resolution

It is resolved that the CNSA support the development of quality preparatory material in French that will allow Francophone students completing an undergraduate nursing program outside Québec to successfully complete the NCLEX exam in their mother tongue.

It is resolved that the CNSA increase awareness of the lack of such material and that it partner with organizations and institutions in an effort to develop the necessary resources.

Conclusion

In closing, it bears reiterating that the inequity between various groups of nursing students as regards the entry-to-practice exam is unacceptable; these particular students cannot adequately prepare themselves in the language of their choice, i.e., the language in which they completed their entire training. This is quite simply because there are no preparatory resources in French. To better defend the interests of a large percentage of its members while also acknowledging Canada's special demographics, this notice of motion calls upon the CNSA to join the other groups that are already lobbying for the development of such resources, which are indisputably necessary to ensure ongoing French-language learning in the nursing sector. Francophone students, in other words, must have the same opportunity as their peers to successfully complete the entry-to-practice NCLEX exam.



References

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