

## ICHM's Parish Nursing Ministry Education Program

**InterChurch Health Ministries (ICHM)** has developed a unique congregational development model for Parish Nursing Ministry education. ICHM's philosophical perspective that Parish Nursing Ministry is theologically based, congregationally driven and mission and ministry focused forms the framework for its education program, which involves not only the registered nurse but parishioners and clergy as well. The goal is to assist congregations to reclaim their historic role of health and healing ministry through Parish Nursing Ministry.

In this model, the Parish Nurse works as a catalyst and facilitator to engage the congregation in health and healing ministry. The Parish Nurse has a unique role in ministry as part of the ministry team, working with individuals and groups to promote holistic health. In addition to that she works with a Health Committee of parishioners and clergy to mobilize the congregation in developing an emphasis on linking faith and health within the life and work of the congregation. The Health (Cabinet) Committee is an important part of the ministry because it works with the Parish Nurse to identify the health education and support needs of the congregation and community and then develops programs\initiatives to address these needs. This enables the work to go far beyond anything any one individual (the nurse, clergy or parishioner) can do.

InterChurch Health Ministries works in **partnership** with congregations/agencies to develop this model of congregational ministry. Having developed the first pilot programs in 1995, ICHM has, from the beginning, believed that health committee members and clergy should be included along with Parish Nurse Candidates in the education program.

It is a congregational decision to be part of the education program by becoming a partner with ICHM. In the partnership, ICHM commits to supporting the congregation in the development of the ministry through our education program, ongoing supervision and support and all the resources that ICHM has developed over the years including standards of practice, documentation forms, policies and procedures and a resource handbook.

ICHM works collaboratively with the International Parish Nurse Resource Center in St. Louis, Missouri. Our **educational partners** are Emmanuel College, Victoria University in the University of Toronto and Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. ICHM's affiliate in Saskatchewan works with the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon and in New Brunswick, the New Brunswick Parish Nursing Ministries delivers the parish nursing education program at the University of New Brunswick in Moncton and also in Fredericton, Saint John and Bathurst.

The curriculum of the Basic Parish Nurse Preparation Program, first developed and regularly revised by the International Parish Nurse Resource Center, has been augmented by the addition of modules developed by ICHM. The **Canadian context** of Parish Nursing Ministries in the curriculum is further addressed through the selection of faculty members whose expertise in theology, nursing and other related fields provides contemporary and contextual relevance. A Canadian Appendix to the curriculum is presently being developed by ICHM. The program is taught at the baccalaureate level and

includes both theory and practice. Program presenters include seminary professors, nurse educators and other experts from the community.

Classroom theoretical content in both level one and level two of the program is followed by 100 hours of integrated and supervised practicum (200 hours total) in the congregational setting. During these practicum experiences, Parish Nurse Candidates attend monthly Parish Nurse Support Group meetings and are also mentored by experienced parish nurses. In addition, ICHM has developed Competency Statements which are used as tools to assist Parish Nurse Candidates in the application of theory to practice and also to assess parish nursing competence.

The configuration of program delivery varies. At Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, the program is delivered three modules per weekend (Friday evening and all day Saturday) for four weekends. At Emmanuel College, the program is delivered over six Saturdays each fall, beginning on the first Saturday after Thanksgiving.

In all cases, the general format remains the same (i.e. 3 levels with practica following levels 1 and 2 and a service of recognition and blessing following level 3). The levels are delivered concurrently thus providing an opportunity for networking across levels during the program.

Level 1 includes topics such as the ***Role of the Church in Health and Healing, Theology and Health, Spirituality and Religion, Philosophy of Parish Nursing, Spiritual Assessment and Care, the Roles of the Parish Nurse, the Role of the Health Cabinet/Committee and Getting Started.***

Following Level 1, the nurse participates in a six-month practicum experience (minimum 4 hours per week) wherein she works with the health committee to begin establishing the ministry. Here it is very helpful if clergy and potential or actual health committee members have attended SOME of the classes. After Level 1, the tasks are clear and the work of analyzing the needs of the congregation and creating a profile for the ministry can begin. The parish nurse candidate also works with a mentor provided by ICHM and attends monthly Parish Nurse Support Group meetings.

Level 2 develops the ministry further through topics such as ***Community Assessment, Accountability, Documentation, Functioning within a Ministerial Team, Self Care for Parish Nurses, Prayer and Worship Leadership.***

This level is also followed by a second six-month practicum. All nurses in Level 2 are working within partnership congregations. As already noted, it is a requirement that the Parish Nurse Candidate be supported by a mentor, attend monthly Regional Support Group meetings along with other active Parish Nurses and adhere to the policies developed by ICHM (documentation is a good example).

Level 3 covers the remaining modules in the curriculum: topics such as *Legal and Ethical Issues in Parish Nursing Ministry, Ministering with the Marginalized* and others.

We have found that by the end of the three level educational program, the ministry is in place having been developed over a period of time with guidance and support.

Health Committee members have never been expected to attend classes beyond Level 1 but we have found that many continue through the program because the classes are so engaging and they become a part of the individual's own continuing education and theological reflection.

The partnership fee is \$650 per year and for that cost, at this time, any number of people from the congregation are welcome to attend the course. Additional registration fees for the education program apply. As well the congregation has the resources and consultation support of ICHM throughout.

The **success of ICHM's unique Education Program** is measured by the development and continuing congregational commitment to Parish Nursing Ministry as parishioners, clergy and Parish Nurses collaborate to promote health and healing in their communities. Because congregations are not always ready to commit to the health and healing ministry and partnership with ICHM, registered nurses in independent study may be admitted into Level 1 (cost: \$500.00). In this case, the required practicum (hopefully in the nurse's church) is an opportunity for the congregation to learn more about the ministry and catch a vision of how it could augment the life and work of the church. However, at ICHM we are committed to the model because it is so effective. Therefore we expect the congregation to be in partnership and showing its support for the ministry before the Parish Nurse Candidate enters level 2.

Congregations remain in partnership with ICHM in order to benefit from the regional monthly parish nurse support group meetings, continuous access to the Education Program ( for new health committee members, new Parish Nurse Candidates, clergy), continuing education opportunities (annual Education Day, Parish Nurse retreat, supplemental modules) and ongoing support and resources (consultations, website, newsletter, library). Innovative resources being developed across the ICHM network are also shared with our partners.

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