

ICHM's PARISH NURSING EDUCATION PROGRAM

Also called FAITH COMMUNITY NURSING EDUCATION:

- ❖ **The curriculum is developed by the Church Health Centre of the International Parish Nurse Resource Centre in Memphis TN. It is revised by Parish Nursing experts in Ontario to be appropriate for Canadian application.**

InterChurch Health Ministries Canada (ICHM) has developed a unique congregational development model for education that 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 herself has a unique role in ministry as part of the ministry team as she works with individuals and groups to promote wholistic 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 Canada 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 Memphis, Tennessee. In Ontario our **educational partners** are Emmanuel College, Victoria University in the University of Toronto and Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, Waterloo. ICHM's affiliate in Saskatchewan works with the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon.

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 a Canadian Appendix to the Curriculum and the selection of faculty members whose expertise in theology, nursing and other related fields provides contemporary and contextual relevance.

The program is taught at the baccalaureate level and includes both theory and practice. 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 Professional Practice 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 with our affiliates across the country. Some programs deliver three modules per weekend (Friday evening and all day Saturday – Saskatchewan). In Ontario, the program is delivered at Emmanuel College, Toronto over four Saturdays each fall, beginning on the first Saturday after Thanksgiving. In October 2013, ICHM will begin a pilot project of offering its education in class at Emmanuel College and simultaneously offering it to distant sites by webinar with one module online. Contact ICHM for more information.

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: Introduction, *Healing & Wholeness, Theology and Health, History and Philosophy of Parish Nursing, Therapeutic Communication, Documentation, 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, Care Coordination, Accessing Resources, Health Promotion, Advocacy, Functioning within a Ministerial Team, Conflict Management, Ethical Issues and Prayer.*

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). For those at a distance, support will be offered by Skype.

Level 3 covers the remaining modules in the curriculum: topics such as *Suffering, Grief and Loss, Theological Reflection, Legal Aspects, Family Violence, Theological Reflection and Self Care.*

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. We have never expected health cabinet members to do more than attend classes in Level 1 but we have found that many are now wanting to 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 upon registering. 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, we do admit registered nurses for independent study 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 get an idea of how it would work in that setting. However, 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.