



HSA RPNs address trauma at professional event

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RPNs Nicole McIntosh and Genelle Sandberg were on hand to promote HSA's work.

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HSA and its members played a big role in a recent event hosted by the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of BC.

The CRPNBC's annual education day, held in Coquitlam this year, focussed on the various forms of trauma affecting psychiatric nurses and the people they care for.

Trauma is defined as "experiences that overwhelm an individual's capacity to cope", and many people entering psychiatric care have been exposed to trauma and violence. RPNs are also exposed to verbal and physical abuse from clients, aggression from peers, and harassment and bullying from often overwhelmed supervisors. The result can be burn-out, post-traumatic stress disorder, and reduced job satisfaction.

HSA members and staff were on hand to help promote the union's work on occupational health and safety and other issues of importance to RPNs, and HSA RPN Larry Bryan presented on violence prevention. Bryan is a recipient of the David Bland Award, an honour bestowed on HSA members who show leadership on occupational health and safety issues. The award is named after a vocational rehabilitation counsellor who was murdered at his workplace by a former client in 2005.

"I have seen too many colleagues who have been affected by being on the receiving end of a violent incident, either directly or as an observer," says Bryan.

"As health care professionals we are all helpers. It is what we do. I think sometimes we take better care of those under our care, than ourselves. Sometimes we give ourselves secondary or tertiary importance and over time this drift occurs, and we are not aware of it until something happens. Please take care of yourselves and your co-workers."

Bryan's presentation reviewed current developments in violence prevention and emphasized the need to be informed about patients and clients, ask co-workers for help, document all incidents, join the joint occupational health and safety committee in your worksite, and review resources at WorkSafeBC.com.

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