

WSNA Local Unit GRAYS HARBOR

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*The Oldest and Largest
Union Representing
Registered Nurses in
Washington State*



NEW YEAR NEWS

Hello, everyone--Happy 2009! In this New Year of hope, we look forward to some challenging, but exciting, changes, and we aspire to positive change in your work conditions. Have you been keeping up with the WSNA website? If you have, you already know that we have some major goals for 2009 which we feel will benefit nurses, and thereby benefit patients as well. Some of WSNA's efforts on your behalf are represented by three bills which are currently pending in the State legislature. These bills have gone to both the House and Senate, and they speak to the elimination of loopholes in the mandatory overtime law, and the promotion of your ability to take full, uninterrupted rest breaks. Research tells us that nurses who work long hours with inadequate rest periods are more likely to suffer decreased alertness, longer response times, and a reduced ability to concentrate. As you may guess, this means some impaired judgment and performance with a statistically higher incidence of accidents and mistakes. Have you been hearing a lot about medication errors lately? Are twelve-hour shifts the norm for you? If so, do you really take your full lunch break and rest periods? If you do not, we both know the probable reason—nurses feel responsible for their patient's safety and care, even when they are trying to take a break, and we both know there is often no one extra to relieve you. Perhaps there is another busy nurse, who already has his/her own patients to manage, trying to take on responsibility for your patients while you are gone. Not too comforting, and not too restful. So these are two major issues we are fighting for:

- **1) A nurse's ability to take full, uninterrupted rest breaks -** Current practice may claim that brief interruptions in work activities provide adequate intermittent breaks, but this practice is detrimental to patient safety and nurse wellbeing.



- **2) Closing loopholes in the mandatory overtime law -**
Loopholes need to be closed in the current mandatory overtime law to ensure that the exemptions to the law are not being used inappropriately, as this leads to longer hours for nurses and compromised patient care.

Hope you were able to make it to Legislation Day on 02/2/09. If not, please go to our website, (www.wsna.org), and lend your voice in promoting the above goals—you can contact your representatives about these issues from our website! Click into the feature—“Legislative Action Center”, and lend your voice.

GRAY’S HARBOR ISSUES



You will soon be asked to vote on a new MOU for the initiation of a Wellness Program at Gray’s Harbor. Members of your

Executive Team have worked very hard with representatives of Local 21, Management, and WSNA to negotiate this MOU, and your Executive Team can now recommend you vote positively on this as a means to implement step 26 of your current contract wage rates. Your Executive Team fought to make sure the MOU was incentive based, voluntary, confidential, and non-punitive.

Just a word about grievances.... As we hope you are aware, the grievance process addresses violations of your rights under your WSNA contract, and it is very important that you quickly notify your local unit Grievance Officer as soon as you feel an article of your contract has been violated. Your Grievance Officer will provide a grievance form and can help you fill it out; your G.O. can help to interpret the contract article and the violation that may have occurred. Some issues are more general than individual, and may be more appropriate for the Executive Team to take to the Nurse Practice Committee, but your Grievance Officers can help to determine this, and getting the information to them in a timely way will ensure that the problem is addressed. Contact the Grievance Officers at the top left of this Newsletter, or if you are unable to reach them, contact your Nurse Representative.

Another word...Weingarten rules...these are part of Supreme Court law that gives you the right to ask for, and be allowed, union representation. If you are called into any meeting with management that could result in investigatory or disciplinary action, request union representation. You must initiate this request when called into a supervisor’s office if you determine that the meeting might lead to disciplinary action. Management is obligated to allow union representation, and one of your local unit officers can be scheduled to accompany you. Be respectful, but refrain from answering any questions possibly

leading to discipline without fair representation.

only the pain but the measures taken to relieve that pain?

NURSE PRACTICE CONCERNS

Management teams everywhere have expressed concern about RNs knowing and adhering to the tenets of the Nursing Practice Act, and you may need to review the regulations which govern your license for your own peace of mind. Many errors occur in the realm of medication administration, and as we know, distraction, fatigue, pharmacy error, and doctor omissions are just a few of the reasons errors occur. Management is concerned about standards of nursing practice and documentation for reasons of patient safety as well as compliance with State regulations. Nurses can help themselves decide what is within their scope of practice, and whether or not a medication should be administered by asking themselves the following questions:

- 1) Has the MD written a complete, legible order that you are familiar with and can confidently give, or should you call him/her to clarify the order?
- 2) Have you documented all the actions you took on the patient's behalf in assessment, nursing diagnosis, planning care, and performing the appropriate nursing interventions?
- 3) Have you appropriately and regularly assessed the patient for pain levels and documented not

If you are unsure about whether or not an action falls within the nursing scope of practice, ask yourself whether it is consistent with one or more of the following:

- The Nursing Commission standards of practice.
- The National Nursing Organization standards of practice.
- Current nursing literature and research.

To protect yourself and your patients, if the answer to any of the above is no, then you should consult the physician and/or your supervisor before carrying out the order.

With all that said, nurses are known to be conscientious, caring, and very dedicated, and 2009 will be your greatest year yet! WSNA will be there with you all the way—contact us with any questions.

Up Coming Events

Mark your calendars now! Go to the WSNA.org website to see more information and register.

**WSNA Convention '09
April 29 – May 1, 2009**