Dealing with issues of impaired nursing practice

IT’S 3 AM, WHAT DO I DO?

“Please hurt my feelings, before I die!”
(Maine Board of Nursing, 2009, p.2).
What is the Peer Assistance Program in Nursing (PAPIN)?

- A program of the South Carolina Nurses Association (SCNA) that is conducted as part of SCNA’s commitment to nurses in our state.
- The purpose is to provide support groups for nurses who are dealing with addictions.
- PAPIN has a contractual relationship with the Recovering Professionals Program (RPP) to provide support groups for nurses in recovery.

What is PAPIN?

- PAPIN meetings are support groups, not therapy groups.
- The focus is on assisting the nurse to deal with issues related to recovery and work, with the goal of returning the nurse to practice.
- Nurses who have a contract with RPP may be required to attend PAPIN meetings as part of their recovery plan, if they live within 25 miles of a group meeting.

What is PAPIN?

- Nurses may also attend PAPIN voluntarily without involvement from RPP.
- PAPIN’s services are free and confidential.
- PAPIN is run by a steering committee of SCNA members, led by a chairperson appointed by the SCNA board.
What is PAPIN?

- The SCNA Board approves all policies and procedures of PAPIN.
- PAPIN group facilitators are appointed by the PAPIN Steering Committee and, in addition to being SCNA members, are required to meet criteria set by the Steering Committee in order to serve as facilitators.

What is PAPIN?

- Group Facilitators are required to maintain attendance records of all group meetings and to provide those records to RPP as requested.
- Group Facilitators also have an obligation to report to RPP when a nurse referred by RPP either drops out of the group or relapses.

How did PAPIN Get Started in SC?

- In the mid-1980’s there was a new awareness of the issues of addictions disease and the effects on the profession of nursing.
- SCNA and representatives of the SC Board of Nursing began work and a committee was formed to offer a range of services to nurses with the disease of addiction. This SCNA committee, was called the Peer Assistance Committee.
The Early Days – 1980’s

- A bill was prepared to submit to the General Assembly to remove the language that criminalized the condition of having addictions disease.

- The new law spelled out that “engaging in the practice of nursing when judgment or physical ability is impaired by alcohol, drugs, or controlled substances or has declined or been unsuccessful in accomplishing rehabilitation” would be one of the grounds for discipline of licensees by the Board of Nursing.

PAPIN Groups

- Today there are 9 groups throughout SC
  - Columbia
  - Spartanburg
  - Florence
  - Charleston
  - Greenville
  - Myrtle Beach
  - Loris
  - Rock Hill

How big is the problem of substance abuse among nurses?

- 22.6 million Americans aged 12 and older were current drug users – 8.9% of the population. (SAMSHA, 2011).

- In 2010 an estimated 22.1 million persons were classified with substance dependence or abuse in the past year.
How big is the problem of substance abuse among nurses?

- 2.9 million were classified with dependence on both alcohol and illicit drugs.
- 4.2 million for illicit drugs but not alcohol.
- 15 million had dependence on or abuse of alcohol but not illicit drugs.

According to a 2009 article in *Modern Medicine*, approximately 10% of nurses are dependent on drugs, which is consistent with the incidence in the general population. With nearly 3 million practicing nurses, that would be 300,000 nurses suffering from substance abuse.

The Office of Diversion Control (USDOJ, 2012) found that the abuse of prescription drugs, especially controlled substances, is a serious social and health problem in the United States today.

How does one recognize substance abuse/addiction?

- Work absenteeism
  - Excessive number of sick days used
  - Absences without notification
  - Pattern of absence e.g. before or after a weekend
- If nurse is diverting drugs at work there may be a pattern of coming in to work even when there is justification to stay home
  - Volunteer for overtime
  - At work when not scheduled to be there
- Frequent disappearances from the work site
How does one recognize substance abuse/addiction?

- Long unexplained absences from work site
- Improbable excuses for absence from work site
- Frequent trips to the bathroom
- Frequent trips to stock room/med room where drugs are kept

How does one recognize substance abuse/addiction?

- Excessive amounts of time spent near drug supply.
- Unreliability in keeping appointments and meeting deadline.
- Interpersonal relations suffer.

How does one recognize substance abuse/addiction?

- Work performance fluctuating between periods of high and low productivity
  - Mistakes made due to inattention
  - Poor judgment and bad decisions
  - Confusion, memory loss and difficulty concentrating or recalling details and instructions. Ordinary tasks require greater effort and consume more time
How does one recognize substance abuse/addiction?

- Rarely admits errors or accepts blame for errors or oversights
  - Heavy wastage of drugs. Look for patterns of wasting drugs without a witness
  - Sloppy record keeping, suspect ledger entries and drug shortages
  - Inappropriate prescriptions for large narcotic doses

How does one recognize substance abuse/addiction?

- Insistence of personal administration of injected narcotics for patients
- Progressive deterioration in appearance
- Uncharacteristic deterioration of handwriting and charting
- Wearing long sleeves when inappropriate

How does one recognize substance abuse/addiction?

- Personality changes
  - Patient and staff complaints about health care provider, especially complaints by patients of no relief of pain
  - Increasing personal and professional isolation
Case A
Diversion/Reported to SCSBN

Case B
Self-Identified to RPP

Case C
Self-Identified to PAPIN

SCSBN

RPP

PAPIN

PAPIN
Support Groups

SOUTH CAROLINA RECOVERING PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM (RPP)

- RPP is a confidential referral and monitoring program designed for physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dentists and podiatrists in South Carolina who are experiencing problems related to alcohol and/or other drug abuse or dependence, or from a dual diagnosis of addiction and mental illness. The program ensures that impaired professionals receive the help they need at the earliest point possible.

- RPP assists the medical professional to return to safe practice -- a decision that benefits the individual, the profession and society at large -- by ensuring that the professional complies with an established treatment protocol and appropriate continuing care. RPP emphasizes confidentiality, education and opportunity, while treating the professional with compassion, dignity and respect throughout the process of recovery.

- For more information, visit their website http://www.scrpp.org
Let’s use the toolkit

☐ Go to www.scnurses.org

☐ Click on Nursing Resources

☐ In drop box, click on SCNA Peer Assistance Program

☐ On right side toolbar, click on Impaired Nurse Toolkit

Let’s use the toolkit...

Case #1- Anita

☐ 3AM on night shift of holiday weekend

☐ Coworkers report suspicious behavior
It’s 3 AM.
You think a staff member has been drinking or diverting drugs.
Do you know what to do?
How to protect your patients, your organization, and the rights of your employees?

Understand and be able to clearly state your organization's drug and alcohol philosophy, policies and procedures.
Educate yourself on prevention, symptoms, necessary actions, legal rights and responsibilities.
Review how your team will work together for the safety and well being of both patients and staff.
Under all circumstances, be sure you are following your organization's policies and procedures and the laws that govern nursing in SC.

Handling an Impaired Employee

- Make sure the patients and the employee are safe, then contact your supervisor.
- Escort the employee to a private area.
- Call in another supervisor who can serve as a reliable witness.
- Inform the employee of your observations and concerns. *
- Ask for an explanation.
- The employee may be required to submit to a drug screen. (per organizational policy)
Handling an Impaired Employee

- If you think the employee may have drugs or alcohol hidden, you may ask them if you can look through their things (with a witness).
- Do not search their property without their permission.
- Provide a safe way for them to get home.
- Offer the services of your Employee Assistance Program.

Handling an Impaired Employee

- Call your administrator or leave a message for Human Resources.
- Work with them to conduct an investigation as soon as possible.
- Document facts (only what you see or hear) and behavior, not suspicions, not possible diagnoses.
- Refer to your organization’s requirements for documenting such incidents.

HANDLING AN ALLEGATION
Reporting

See item # 11 in the toolkit
- DEA (Federal)
- Attorney General's Office-Medicaid Fraud Control Unit
- SC DHEC Bureau of Drug Control (SC DEA)
- LLR- Board of Nursing
- SC Department of Health and Human Services
- Local police

Employee Protection Considerations

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Alcoholism
- Illegal use of drugs

Resources for Anita

- Recovering Professionals Program
- PAPIN
PREPARING STAFF FOR THE RETURN OF THE RECOVERING EMPLOYEE

- How much to share?
- Dealing with coworker anger/disappointment
- Setting clear expectations for the returning employee and for coworkers

Another scenario...

Case #2 – Roger
- Pharmacy reports unusual narcotics activity on your unit
- Roger is identified as being involved

HANDLING AN ALLEGATION
It’s 3 AM.
You think a staff member has been drinking or diverting drugs.
Do you know what to do?
Do you know how to protect your patients, your organization, and the rights of your employees?

Three Critical Steps to take care of before the crisis:

1. Understand and be able to clearly state your organization's drug and alcohol philosophy, policies and procedures

2. Educate yourself on prevention, symptoms, necessary actions, legal rights and responsibilities

3. Review how your team will work together for the safety and well being of both patients and staff.

Reporting

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Do I have a problem?

☐ Cut down on drinking or drug use?
☐ Annoyed by others’ criticisms of your drinking or drug use
☐ Guilt about drinking or drug use
☐ Eye-openers…use your drinking or drug first thing in the morning to get going

1 yes = possible problem
2 yes = do have a problem

Suggested Websites

National Council of State Boards of Nursing: www.NCSBN.org/SUDN

NCSBN document on Substance Use Disorders in Nursing Manual is a comprehensive, 280-page manual was developed to provide practical and evidence-based guidelines for evaluating, treating and managing nurses with a substance use disorder. It contains information on prevention, detection and intervention of substance use disorders along with key research findings. There are also guidelines and program recommendations as well as examples of model contracts, forms and reports.

Suggested Websites

• American Nurses Association: www.nursingworld.org
  At the Nursing World home page, look under Health and Safety for the “Impaired Nurse Resource Center.” There are links to many other websites including a list of ANA positions, resolutions passed by the House of Delegates and a number of other resources.

• Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): www.samhsa.gov
  The SAMHSA website is a rich resource for information on prevention, data and recovery support resources.
Suggested Websites

- SC Board of Nursing: www.llr.sc.us/pol/nursing
  The Board of Nursing website provides access to the laws and policies that regulate nursing in SC.

- SC Recovering Professionals Program (RPP)
  http://www.scrpp.org
  Provides information about how to access services of the Recovering Professionals Program, which provides assessment, treatment referrals and ongoing counseling and monitoring for nurses and other professionals.

Suggested Websites

- Alcoholics Anonymous www.aa.org
  Find local meetings and information about alcohol addiction recovery

- Narcotics Anonymous www.na.org
  Find local meetings and information about narcotics addiction recovery

What questions do you have?

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