

Hepatology Nursing in Canada: Current Practices and Future Challenges

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Background

- The hepatology nursing role evolved in Canada during the mid-1980s.
- The majority of nursing practices' focus on viral hepatitis; notably hepatitis C virus infection (HCV).
- HCV in the past was viewed as a chronic, incurable liver disease. Hepatology nurses were highly valued in the management of patients undergoing treatment during the era of interferon based therapy.
- New DAA treatments offer minimal side effects, shorter treatment duration and higher cure rates than previous treatments.
- This rapidly changing treatment landscape in HCV is impacting the role of hepatology nurses.

Aims

- To describe the Canadian hepatology nursing workforce and current practice settings.
- To explore the liver nurses' perceptions and concerns about the future of hepatology nursing and the impact upon careers.

Methods

The Canadian Association of Hepatology Nurses (CAHN) is a national non-profit nursing organization established in 1999. CAHN members represent nurses from across Canada who practice in hepatology nursing. The mandate of CAHN is to promote leadership, best clinical practice, education and research in hepatology nursing.

Methodology

- An 18-item questionnaire was designed and sent via email in Oct 2014 inviting all active CAHN members to participate
- One reminder email was sent 8 weeks later
- An additional reminder was issued at the annual CAHN conference in Feb 2015

Data Collected

Demographics

- Age, length of time in practice, practice settings and focus of practice

Practice concerns

- Job satisfaction and security
- Sustainability of current practice positions
- Changes in role description
- Future of hepatology nursing
- Barriers to growth

Response rate

- 94 of 140 (67%) active members completed the survey

Table 1. Participant demographics
N= 94

Age Group	
20 - 39	22 %
40 - 49	28 %
50 - 59	35 %
> 60	15 %

Years of experience in hepatology	
< 5 years	17 %
5 - 10 years	46 %
> 10 years	37 %

Employment status	
Full time	81 %

Practice setting	
Community care centres	33 %
Academic hospitals	30 %
Community hospitals	15 %
Specialty clinics	6 %
Public health	4 %
Other	22 %

Practice focus *	
Hep B & C	49 %
Hep C only	52 %
Transplant	11 %
Cirrhosis	43 %
HCC	20 %

* Can have more than one practice focus

Salary support source

Hospital	19 %
University	3 %
Provincial Ministry	25 %
Industry	35 %
Agency	22 %
Others **	19 %

** Research grants, private funds, MD

Results

Figure 1. Job Satisfaction

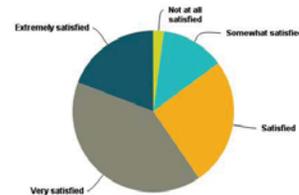


Figure 2. Job Concerns and Sustainability

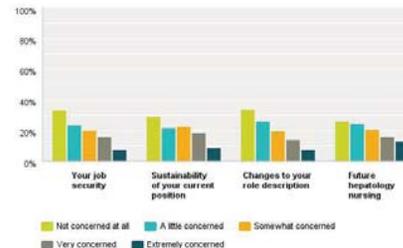


Figure 3. Sources of Role Support

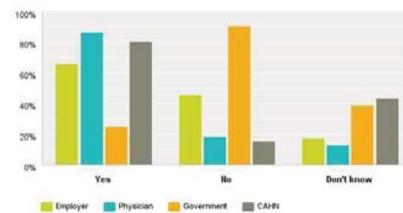


Figure 4. Hepatology Nurse Role/ Position Diminishing

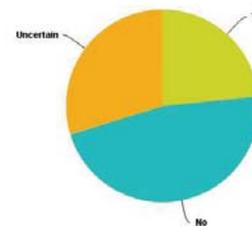


Figure 5. Barriers to the Future of Hepatology Nursing

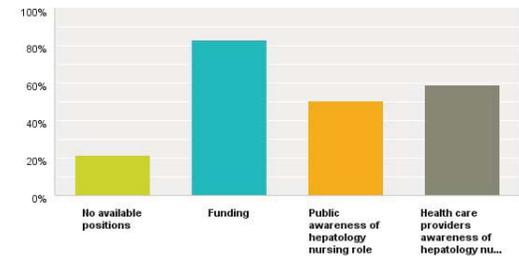
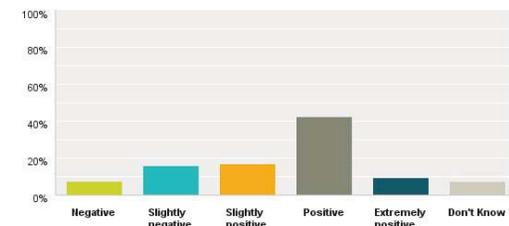


Figure 6. Perceptions of the Future of Hepatology Nursing



Conclusions

- Canadian hepatology nurses are seasoned, experienced and knowledgeable professionals.
- We are satisfied with what we do, and feel supported by physician colleagues.
- We remain optimistic that the hepatology nursing role is sustainable in the future, but acknowledge awareness that the present role may change.
- The lack of a current provincial funding structure for hepatology nursing roles, remains a barrier for sustainability of current roles.
- Development of nursing specific outcomes highlighting the value of hepatology nurses in Canada are required.

Acknowledgements

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