

College & Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta

CARNA



 thoughtexchange

In its 100-year history, the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA) has seen health care evolve from the front lines of patient care. In the midst of medical advancements and technological innovation, there are endless opportunities for Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners to help shape the future of health care and how it's delivered. Yet, trying to find a unified voice and common understanding amongst CARNA's 37,000 members is no easy feat. In particular, CARNA recognized that the topic of mandatory influenza immunization was sensitive and could polarize members.

4,767 participants

199,575 stars

18,480 thoughts

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The College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta finds its voice through engagement

The realities and logistical challenges of the nursing profession make two-way conversations especially difficult. Despite CARNA's best efforts to use traditional engagement methods, many members were feeling left out of this important conversation and others like it. To overcome this, CARNA turned to Thoughtexchange for its unique, innovative and large-scale online process – one that could yield both high quantity and high quality participation. Thoughtexchange allows members to participate in the conversation and provide thoughts at their convenience.

Mass engagement and efficiency

In the hopes of stimulating a deep and possibly divergent discussion, members were asked to respond to two very different scenarios about influenza immunizations and other protective measures. CARNA was very surprised and encouraged that 4,767 members participated, sharing 18,480 different Thoughts, and assigning 199,575 Stars to prioritize the most important ideas. This level of participation, compared to what's been seen in the past using traditional techniques, underscored for them the effectiveness of this new method.

By approaching a topic like immunization through a collaborative negotiation process, CARNA and its members were able to work toward common understanding, despite divergent views.

If instead CARNA held around-the-clock, face-to-face meetings, giving each member one minute to share his or her thoughts, it would take more than three straight days to hear everyone's perspective. Participating members found the Thoughtexchange process to be very valuable, as it provided them with an effective avenue for input, and allowed them to learn from the perspectives of their peers. Unlike traditional listening tools such as member forums and surveys, Thoughtexchange's simple process leverages the power of group intelligence and the principles of collaboration and cooperation. People affected by decisions can learn from one another, consider diverse perspectives and maybe even adopt a new point of view – which is exactly what happened during the engagement process on immunization.

Validation and hope through dialogue

By approaching a topic like immunization through a collaborative negotiation process, CARNA and its members were able to work toward common understanding, despite divergent views. At the end of the process, though there is still some debate as to the ideal path forward, it was clear that members shared the fundamental value of putting patient safety first. By focusing its efforts on the common interests of their members – rather than the opposing ones – CARNA was able to develop a shared understanding across the membership.

In addition to sharing the results with its members, CARNA made the reports available to other health care stakeholders – including governing bodies, employers and workers – to inform the broader debate.

Collaborative negotiation amongst thousands

One of the unique aspects of collaborative negotiation is that the approach treats the “relationship” as an important and valuable element of what’s at stake, while seeking common understanding and agreement. As a member-centric organization, this was of utmost importance to CARNA.

And while different views did emerge regarding mandatory immunization, the process used by Thoughtexchange was able to move the registered nurses and nurse practitioners as a group towards a place of common interest. In the end, record participation in the engagement clearly demonstrated how strongly members feel about having a voice on important issues that affect them; leaving CARNA confident they were on track to finding the organization’s collective voice.



CARNA is both the regulatory college and professional association for Alberta’s more than 37,000 registered nurses, including nurses in direct care, education, research, policy and administration, as well as nurse practitioners. As a regulatory college, we set the standards and uphold the code of ethics that govern our practice. As a professional association we work to serve the needs of members, providing services, support and resources that help them realize their professional potential. We also work to raise awareness of the important role RNs and NPs play in ensuring patient safety and quality care.

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Keeping the momentum going

Building on that success, CARNA's second engagement – Uniquely RN – will be an effort to have registered nurses collectively describe RN practice and what distinguishes an RN among the broadening range of care providers. Historically, there had never been a process that could tackle this important question without taking time and resources away from more pressing priorities. Now members can have this deep, complex, conversation, using Thoughtexchange.

Results from member participation in Thoughtexchange helps CARNA identify issues important to registered nurses and how to work together for the best possible patient, community and population outcomes in Alberta. As our population grows and ages, CARNA believes that treating patients for as long as possible in the comfort of their own homes and community is not only the most sustainable solution, but also in many cases is the best place for treatment, recovery, and end of life.

CARNA is confident their members now have a new tool in place to contribute to these important conversations, as their needs – and the needs of their patients – continue to evolve alongside health care in Alberta.



FIVE KEY THINGS WE HEARD

1 There are significant differences of opinion about the single best approach to immunizations. A simple view is that a polarization exists between groups who primarily value nurses' legal/ethical rights to choose versus those who put patient and staff safety first.

2 This polarization however is not black and white. In fact, there is diversity of opinion on this very central point, without necessarily having to trade off one for the other. Many members are concerned about both of these sides and seek a balance of the two with other considerations.

3 Amongst those who strongly value nurses' legal/ethical rights, there is general agreement that mandated immunization improves patient safety. Often broad agreement stems from agreeing on both what you agree about and on what you disagree about.

4 Addressing how broadly all health care professionals would be mandated (not just nurses) and addressing concerns about the logistics of mandating immunizations appear to offer the best chance of creating the broadest agreement amongst members.

5 Looking at the questions that members would like answered also offers some indications of where broad agreement could be reached. Generally members were looking for good evidence about immunizations. Specifically addressing questions about the safety and efficacy of the vaccine, as well laying out a process for how education will be approached, could bring forward broader general agreement.