

Happenings

Taking Pain Information to the Public

Celeste Johnston and Shirley Musclow

On November 4, 2006, the Saturday leading into National Pain Awareness Week, 42 volunteers — almost all nurses — ran 4-hour Pain Information Clinics in 30 Loblaw's pharmacies from Nova Scotia to British Columbia. This was a collaborative initiative of the Canadian Pain Coalition, a partnership of patient pain groups; the Canadian Pain Society (CPS), whose focus is public education about pain; and the CPS Special Interest Group – Nursing Issues (CPS SIG-NI), which represents nurses interested in improving pain practices across Canada.

Loblaw's customers came to their local store for information about steps they could take to manage their pain. The nurses were provided with an interview guide to help customers determine what they could do to help themselves. The aim was to provide free information to the public in order to highlight pain awareness.

A Pain Survival Kit was distributed throughout the 4-hour period. The main item in the kit was an eight-module booklet on pain relief. The modules included answers to the following frequently asked questions: "What is pain? Are there different types of pain? What are the effects of pain on my body? How can I have good sleep hygiene? Is there a connection between stress and pain and depression? What can I do to lower stress? How should I talk to health care professionals about my pain? Are there things I can do besides taking medication to help my pain? What about pain medications? Where can I find more information?"

Information for the booklet was compiled by two McGill University final-year undergraduate nursing students, Kate McNaughton and Anna Kabal, under the supervision of nursing professor Celeste Johnston, who is also Director of the Canadian Pain Coalition and a member of the CPS SIG-NI. The nursing volunteers were solicited by Shirley Musclow, Chair of the CPS SIG-NI.

Feedback was generally very positive. One Loblaw's pharmacist wrote:

The clinic [was] very successful. We had a line up waiting for counselling. ...the next day people came to see us because they heard from their friends how informative it was... I am still getting phone calls from patients asking if the week is still running. Our patients are really appreciating the valued service.

Plans are being made to expand the initiative next year.

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