

Nurse managers: a vital link in the wellness chain

A nurse manager's life is a diverse one! The demands of the role and the responsibilities associated can be enormous and while it comes with its rewards it is also a role that provides a range of challenges.

One of these is establishing, maintaining and nurturing a positive, harmonious and healthy work environment. Critical to the success of this is having close working relationships with staff. Knowing your staff and having a good baseline understanding of what makes each member of the team 'tick' is a key ingredient to managing the dynamics and promoting the good health of a department.

A nurse manager concerned for the health of a staff member recently contacted the Victorian Nurses Health Program for some support. Over time she had observed in this person, a general withdrawal from others; a loss of spark and enthusiasm for the work; periods of lethargy and an overall loss of vitality.

To the uninitiated these things were of no major consequence. For this manager, knowing this person well and identifying a distinct change in their presentation rang alarm bells. She could see signs of what she thought were burn out. The crunch came when the nurse returned to work from a period of sick leave in



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nurses' health

no better shape. In fact there had been deterioration in her health.

Staff at the VNHP advised this manager on approaching this nurse sensitively and informed her of the agency's referral process. The manager was able to have the difficult conversation with the nurse in question and suggest her colleague contact the VNHP.

Seeking help can be hard. For this nurse it was tough but she expressed a great sense of relief in having taken the first step. From the outset she described an overwhelming sense of tiredness. She felt out of control, unable to make clear and confident decisions and had lost her passion for work and life.

Together we developed a support plan that she has continued to practice. Her health has improved as a result and in turn her life feels valuable and worthwhile.

This case is a good and common example of where a nurse manager with sound inter-

personal skills combined her knowledge of a colleague with genuine understanding and empathy. It resulted in a colleague receiving the support needed at an important time of her life.

The roles of nurse manager and associate unit manager are significant not only for the individual with impaired health but for the health and wellbeing of whole departments and by extension entire organisations. The nurse manager is a truly vital link in the wellness chain and one that deserves acknowledgement and ongoing support.

STOP PRESS: Please note that due to overwhelming demand the inaugural Nurses' & Midwives Wellness Conference has been moved to the MELBOURNE EXHIBITION AND CONVENTION CENTRE 1 CONVENTION CENTRE PLACE, SOUTH WHARF, VIC
Places are still available. For all conference information and registration details go to our website www.vnhp.org.au