

Part one:

Recruiting *Canadian* Health Professionals a *Healthbeat* Special



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Our readers may recall that in the Spring of this year Healthbeat ran a special on International recruitment. We featured international organizations who recruit Canadian health professionals for positions around the world. Now it is time to feature Canadian health care organizations and examine, at least superficially, their recruitment issues and strategies. This month we are featuring four organizations in Atlantic Canada and Ontario. Our purpose is to provide a description of the organization, its location and services as well as their needs and issues in the recruitment and retention of their current and prospective staff.

Angels of Flight Canada Inc., Peterborough, Ontario



Since 1988, Angels of Flight has arranged medical evacuation for ill and injured people both on an emergency and non-emergency basis within Canada and around the world. It is a Canadian company that specializes in medical evacuation and interfacility transportation by both land and air. It is the first Canadian company that provided extensively trained registered nurses who specialize in patient transportation.

The company was founded and continues to be owned and operated by Gail Courneyea, a registered nurse with a specialty in critical/

intensive care nursing. I spoke with Courneyea and asked her to tell me a bit more about her company. In 1988, while working as an experienced intensive care nurse, Courneyea recognized the need for registered nurses trained for patient transportation. Hospital nurses were often expected to travel with patients by air – a totally unfamiliar patient care environment. This recognition led Courneyea to take air medical courses in the United States. Courneyea eventually became a pilot herself. She was in an ideal position to found a company such as Angels of Flight. She was educationally and experientially prepared to offer the service, knew all the issues and problems and knew what equipment and processes were required to care for ill and injured people during medical transportation.

When Angels of Flight was founded, only medical air transport was offered. Eventually, land transportation was offered as well and in 1995, Ambu-Lans, its own land transportation was

added to the growing list of services. The land transportation division provides interfacility and residence to facility patient transfer.

In 1999, a call centre, staffed by flight registered nurses was launched. The purpose of the centre is to provide for professional coordination and triage of medical transport worldwide. A toll free call, either inside or outside North America will be received by a flight registered nurse and sets the transport into motion. Patient's needs are recognized and all travel arrangements are coordinated. Every detail is tended to and a qualified flight/transport nurse will accompany the ill or injured person on route by airline or medical teams by air ambulance.

The company offers employment for both registered nurses and paramedics. Angels has a staff complement of 31 professionals including full time and on-call staff. Nurses with: a current Ontario Certificate of Competence; the ability to work independently; the flexibility to travel; and

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a commitment to an education and training program are considered for employment. Paramedics require a college diploma to work in private transfer vehicles. Paramedics accompany nurses on both flight and land transport. While a team approach to care is emphasized, Courneyea and I talked mainly about registered nurses during our conversation.

Courneyea maintains that every registered nurse has something to offer Angels of Flight should they choose to apply. All resumes are reviewed. Once hired the nurse must commit to a certain amount of service because the in-house training is time and resource intensive. In our short conversation Courneyea indicated that the time spent in orientation and training of new employees is significant. The program includes training in new skills and enhancement of the knowledge and skills that nurses bring to the company when they are hired. Examples of the topics covered by expert instructors during orientation are: transport physiology; aviation safety for both patient and nurse; and emergency preparedness and survival skills. Courneyea emphasized that the company has completed 15 years of "perfect" medical transport and she gives her staff credit for the success. Staff, well trained, provided with the tools to meet the special needs that accompany each transport (cultural differences, security, dress, immunizations etc.) and confident of their decision making with and on behalf of the patient, have made the company's exemplary record.

Staff recruitment has not presented a problem for Courneyea. Angels of Flight offers professional staff an opportunity to work autonomously and independently within policies and protocols and the opportunity for international travel. Staff need to be flexible, able to work within an unstructured work schedule and be healthy. She emphasized that this type of employment is not for everyone. As well, retention has not been an issue for Angels of Flight. Qualified, confident staff, ready for change and at the right time in their lives will stay with the company. As Courneyea says, the non-traditional role that nurses have with Angels has the potential for keeping "nurses in nursing".

For more information: Website: www.angelsofflightcanada.com (Detailed information about services for consumers and other interested people is available on the site.) Phone: 1-800-563-7686 (toll-free North America) 1-705-743-5433 (toll-free outside North America) Fax: 1-705-741-0136 E-mail: help@angelsofflightcanada.com Address: Peterborough Airport Box 17, RR5, Peterborough, ON, Canada K9J 6X6

Nova Scotia Department of Health, Physician Recruitment



Nova Scotia, like all provinces in Canada is a mix of rural, urban and wilderness areas. No matter where they practice in Nova Scotia, physicians need to know that appropriate infrastructure and support is available should they choose to practice there. The Nova Scotia Department of Health accepts the responsibility for physician

Nova Scotia but there are many inquiries from out of country physicians that Peters handles on an almost daily basis.

Peters uses print media and online recruitment advertising. Medical journals, medical specialist journals and magazines like Healthbeat run advertisements for physicians, encouraging them to come or stay in Nova Scotia if they are already there. More targeted strategies include mass mailings to physicians who are residents. These mailings are followed up by Peters based on response by individual physicians. For example, while there is no physician shortage in Nova Scotia Peters says that up to ten family physicians could be used right now and about four or five specialists just to maintain the status quo. Physician practices in rural areas are the easiest to fill with 8 out of ten recruits settling there.

Most physicians in Nova Scotia are remunerated on a fee for service basis and it is through this model that incentives and alternative funding programs are administered. For examples, in under serviced areas (now called incentive areas) a new physician will be guaranteed a minimum billing income. If the physician's billing falls below the guarantee, payment is made based on the minimum. If the billing exceeds the minimum, payment is issued based on actual billing. As well, there is an additional fee allowed for treating individual patients who are over 65. There is also a reentry program. If a physician has spent 2-4 years in family practice, some funding is available for that physician to reenter a specialty in Nova Scotia.