

QUALITY AND COST-EFFECTIVE CARE: A NURSING SOLUTION

Title	OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH NURSES IN ONTARIO: IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE AND EMPLOYER BENEFITS
The Issue	Accidents, injuries and health hazards in the workplace generally differ from those found elsewhere. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), workers are often exposed to hazards in confined spaces and exposure levels are often much higher than in the general environment.
A Solution	Occupational health nurses should be used to increase safety awareness and to reduce the number of injuries and company costs due to occupational injuries and illnesses.
An Example	In 1997, a joint study was undertaken by the Ontario Occupational Health Nurses Association and Ontario's Ministry of Labour. The study used information collected in a survey of Ontario occupational health nurses and from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.
Results	<p>EMPLOYEE-RELATED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Businesses that employ occupational health nurses have 15 per cent fewer employee injuries.• Improved safety awareness in the workplace reduces the amount of time lost due to work-related injuries; occupational health nurses have shown the ability to raise awareness of safety.• Less serious injuries are prevented and effective case management practices accommodate injured workers with minor injuries.• Over a number of years, occupational health nurses reduce the number of injuries in the workplace. <p>EMPLOYER-RELATED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Occupational health nurses contribute to a 40 per cent reduction in accident costs.• Time lost due to work-related accidents declined by 37 per cent between 1995-97 in the larger businesses and by 28 per cent in the medium-sized businesses.

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- The number of complaints, work refusals and critical injury accidents reported to the Ministry of Labour was lower.
- Reduced frequency of lost-time injuries led to a seven per cent reduction in wage replacement costs for injured workers.

ECONOMIC:

- Companies employing occupational health nurses had a reduced rate of injury, fewer severe injuries and an average saving of \$100,000 per company per year.

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References:

Gumpert, H. and Kusiak, R. (1999). The effectiveness of occupational health nurses in Ontario (Part 1). *Ontario Occupational Health Nurses Association Journal*. Summer 1999, 6-11.

Gumpert, H. and Kusiak, R. (1999). The effectiveness of occupational health nurses in Ontario (Part 2). *Ontario Occupational Health Nurses Association Journal*. Autumn 1999, 5-15.