



February 27, 2014

Re: MDs facing abuse from addicted patients, February 27

Our health-care system — plagued with long wait times and barriers to effective prevention and treatment services — is a breeding ground for prescription drug abuse.

But prescription drugs are a real solution for many Canadians and can have important positive effects in their lives. The problem is not a simple one, nor is the remedy. That's why Canada's registered nurses have been calling for consistent, national surveillance systems. More reporting, like the Dalhousie University survey, is needed so government leaders can better understand the seriousness and pervasiveness of prescription drug abuse and create effective, evidence-based policies to address the problem. But we must also examine what is driving the abuse — for example, how inadequate access to health-care providers and long wait times for surgeries or procedures are contributing to the growing problem of prescription drug abuse.

The federal government recently proposed to invest \$44.9 million over five years to include prescription drug abuse in its National Anti-Drug strategy. It's a welcome commitment but it's still missing a breakdown of how those funds will be targeted. Nurses work on the front lines to repair the damage of prescription drug abuse. And nurses expect more than just awareness and law enforcement tactics from this government. Canada needs an anti-drug strategy that includes harm reduction.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Mildon".

Barbara Mildon, RN, PhD, CHE, CCHN(C)
President