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UNLV NURSING PROFESSOR HONORED FOR ROLE IN DEVELOPING SAFE PATIENT HANDLING PROGRAM

*Nancy Menzel on Research Team Given Award of Excellence in Public Health
Training from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

LAS VEGAS – January 29, 2008 – UNLV School of Nursing professor Nancy Menzel and a multidisciplinary team of researchers were honored recently by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the development of a safe patient handling and movement training program for schools of nursing.

Menzel, along with colleagues from the American Nurses Association (ANA), Veterans Health Administration and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, received the Award of Excellence in Public Health Training for developing an evidence-based curriculum module that focuses on modern patient handling equipment and how its use reduces back and other musculoskeletal injuries among nurses. Twenty-six schools of nursing implemented the module in 2006, introducing students for the first time to evidence-based patient lifting and repositioning techniques.

“I am pleased that many nursing students now will be graduating armed with knowledge that can protect them from injuries associated with lifting loads of more than 35 pounds, the maximum safe limit,” said Menzel. “As patients grow heavier and heavier, it will be up to this new generation to educate their employers as to why investing in patient handling equipment will protect their human resources.”

(more)

Safe patient handling and movement refers to a coordinated program of assistive equipment and devices, such as mechanical lifts and lateral transfer devices, as well as work practices that eliminate manual handling. While most work-related injuries among healthcare workers are due to manual lifting of patients, hospitals and nursing homes have been slow to employ these ergonomic programs, which are proven to both reduce injuries to workers and increase the safety of patients.

The first national safe lifting policy was implemented in the United Kingdom in 1992, the result of which showed a decline in musculoskeletal injuries in nurses there. The ANA commenced its “Handle with Care” campaign in 2003 to advocate for safe patient handling legislation in the United States. Several states, such as Texas and Washington, have enacted laws to require safer lifting practices in hospitals and nursing homes.

The award is given each year by the CDC’s Public Health Education and Promotion Network to the training program that has demonstrated a commitment to excellence in public health education.

To learn more, please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/review/public/safe-patient/introduction.html>

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