

Environmental Health and Nursing

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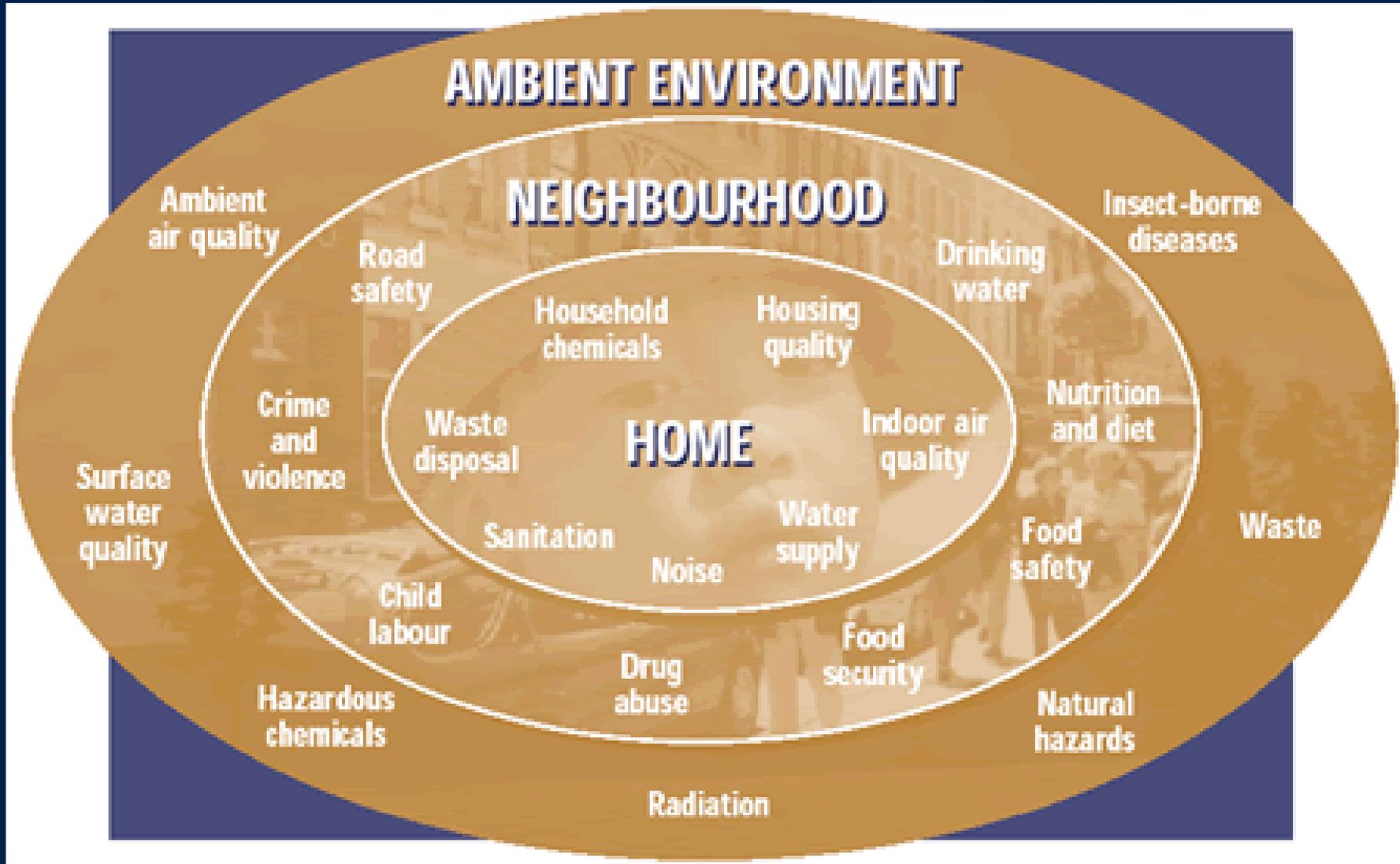


Overview

- Review the purpose of the environmental health initiative;
- Identify key principles of environmental health;
- Report on the findings of a survey of nurses on environmental health; and
- Summarize outcomes of a nursing workshop
- Next steps
- Conclusions

What is environmental health?

Myres & Betke, 2002. © Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, represented by the Minister of Health (2005)



Nursing
started with a
focus on
environmental
health



*Florence Nightingale, born May 12, 1820, in Florence, Italy,
died August 13, 1910, in London, England*



Purpose of the environmental health initiative:

- Increase nurses' awareness of environmental health
- Provide them with tools to engage in environmental health practice, education, administration, research and policy



Examples of nursing's role in environmental health

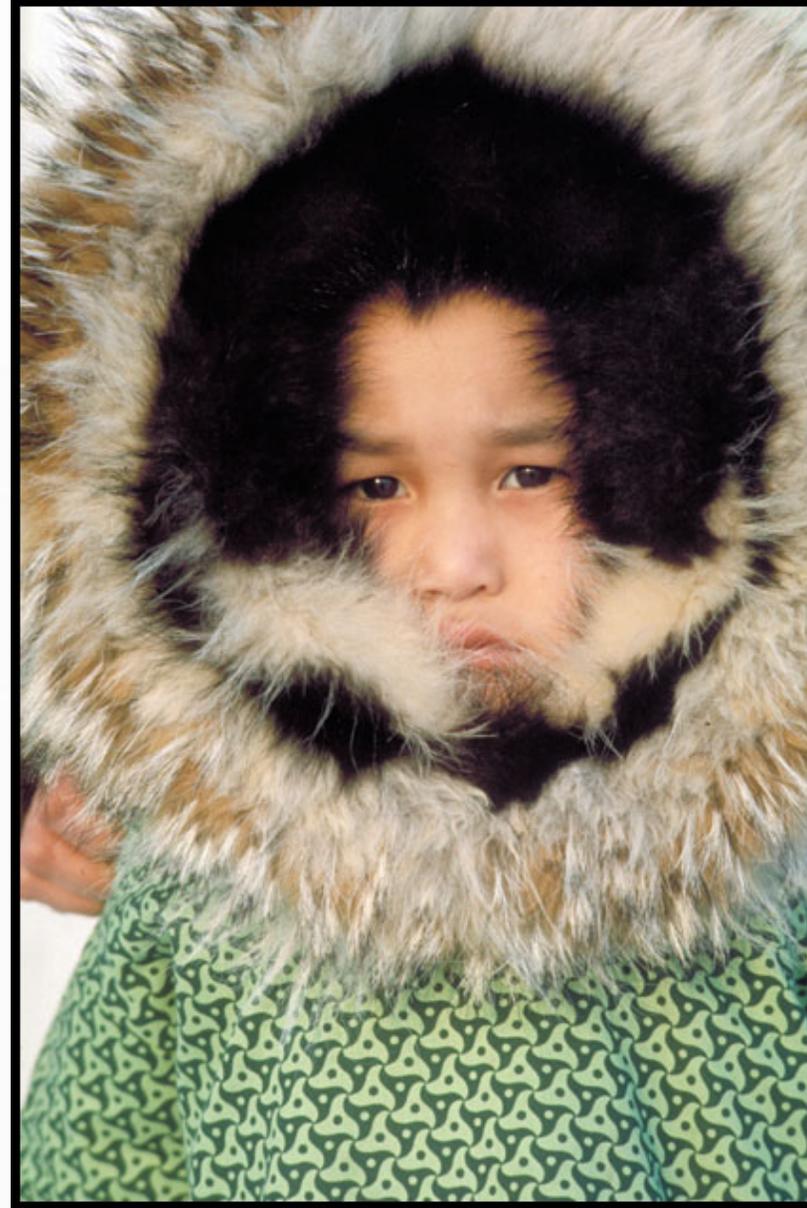
- **Teaching** patients with CVD to cope with poor air quality.
- **Counseling** new parents on safe infant products.
- **Identifying** and **acting** on community concerns about their environment.
- **Supporting** industrial workers to minimize occupational exposures.
- **Assisting** vulnerable populations during emergencies caused by extreme weather events.
- **Advocating** for municipal bylaws to restrict the use of cosmetic pesticides.
- **Encouraging** health facilities across Canada to become more sustainable.



Reference Group



Key principles



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The Environment and Health: An Introduction for Nurses

photo: Comstock



Greening the health care sector



Credit: Getty Images



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Climate change is not just an environmental issue, as too many people still believe. It is an all-encompassing threat.”

Kofi Annan, 2006



© 2000 International Institute for Sustainable Development

Climate change and social justice



© Greenpeace: http://weblog.greenpeace.org/climatesummit/climate_images.html





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Report on findings

Nurses' survey on environmental health

Survey Monkey, December 2007.

- 211 responses
 - older, better educated than Canadian nurses as a group.
- 39.2% - educational sessions on health and environment
- Environmental hazards affecting their patients/clients:
 - Indoor air quality (79.1%)
 - Environmental tobacco smoke (78.6%)
 - Mould 68.4%)
- 56.2% had discussed potential environmental exposures
- 48.8% aware of health protection legislation
- 50.5% routinely ask about ETS in nursing assessment
- 15.8% have a 'green team' where they work

Survey of the public

Six focus groups held across Canada in December, 2007.

- Nurses are very well respected and admired.
- Seen as professional, knowledgeable and caring, as well as overworked due to stresses and shortages in the health care system.
- Benefit from the opportunity they have to observe first hand the impacts of environmental hazards on health.
- Seen as having the interest of Canadians at heart.
- Credible in providing advice on environmental health.
- Concern that an additional focus on EH could have a negative impact on the delivery of primary health care services.

Environmental Health and Climate Change Workshops

Advocating for a Healthy Environment

Presented by Hilda Swirsky, RN, BScN, MEd
RNAO Board Member at Large,
Socio-Political Affairs
February 12, 2008



CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION



Carrie Spencer
Climate Change Impacts
& Adaptation Division
Natural Resources Canada

Canadian Red Cross

Canadian Nurses Association/13 February 2008



Nursing and environmental health

- Curriculum:
 - Interprofessional approach to education and research
 - Environmental health designated as entry to practice competency
- Advocacy:
 - Important to learn from success models – showcase these
 - For example, primary care, public health and rural health
 - Mentoring programs are important
 - For example, development and continuation of Green Teams where nurses mentor other nurses (and others)
 - Encourage nurses to be eco-friendly at home and transfer to workplace and vice-versa
 - Green teams in hospitals and other settings



Nursing's role in climate change

- Adaptation
 - Emergency planning/preparedness
 - Warning systems for heat waves
 - Protective technologies
 - Behaviour changes
- Mitigation
 - Energy efficient, homes, appliances and automobiles
 - Walking, cycling, transit to work
 - Urban planning to decrease commutes
 - Less travel for business
 - Eating local foods etc.



Next Steps

- *Environmental Health Reference Group* is continuing.
- Documents up on the CNA website and NurseOne Portal.
- International nursing interest in EH.
- Position statements to CNA Board.



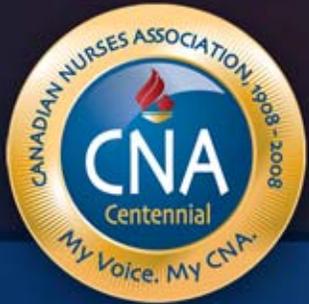
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Conclusions

- The environment has an impact on health.
- Nurses have a role in preventing exposures and reducing risks from environmental hazards.
- Nurses have the skills to be effective in addressing environmental health issues.
- What is needed is to increase their awareness and provide tools they can use – no matter what setting they work in.



NASA Goddard Space Flight Center Image by Reto Stöckli
http://visibleearth.nasa.gov/view_rec.php?id=2429



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